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Othello as a Love-Tragedy

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THE following is the gist of the paragraph in which Coleridge summarizes his view of *Othello*:

> Finally, let me repeat that Othello does not kill Desdemona in jealousy, but in a conviction forced upon him by the almost superhuman art of Iago, such a conviction as any man would and must have entertained who had believed Iago's honesty as Othello did. We, the audience, know that Iago is a villian from the the beginning; but in considering the essence of the Shakespearean Othello, we must perseveringly place ourselves in his situation, and under his circumstances. Then we shall immediately feel the fundamental difference between the solemn agony of the noble Moor and the wretched fishing jealousies of Leontes and the morbid suspiciousness of Leonatus . . . . Othello had no life but in Desdemona: the belief that she, his angel, had fallen from the heaven of her native innocence, wrought a civil war in his heart. She is his counterpart; and like him, is almost sanctified in our eyes by her absolute unsuspiciousness, and holy entireness of love. As the curtain drops, which do we pity the most?

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This means, first, that Iago is overwhelmingly the cause of the tragedy and, secondly, that Othello's love for Desdemona is on a par with her love for him. The second point, which is the main one and really includes the first, is repeated and accentuated by an anonymous writer quoted by Mrs. Jameson in 1833, the year before Coleridge's death: "Othello's love is most perfect, just, and good. . . . That, loving perfectly and well, he should by hellish human circumvention be brought to distrust and dread and abjure his own perfect love, is most mournful indeed: it is the infirmity of our good nature wrestling in vain with the strong powers of evil." The style here, with its triple "perfect" applied to Othello's love, makes us wince a little. But the idea is true to Coleridge. Moreover it is true to the general outlook on literature, life, and love characteristic of the Romantic movement; which established itself in the field of Shakespearean criticism during the first third of the past century.

The close of the first third of the present century finds the Coleridgean or Romantic view of *Othello* still predominant. It has been carried on, with modifications of course but without essential change, by one critic after another. It was followed by Professor A. C. Bradley in his authoritative volume on Shakespearean tragedy (1904) and by Sir Walter Raleigh in his charming book on Shakespeare's whole way and work. It literally holds the boards, it dominates the stage; one result being that the modern male star, possessed by the reigning notion that Iago is at least equally important with Othello, wonders in which of the two rôles he may shine at his fullest. Of course I do not mean that this dilemma was originated by Coleridge, but it was firmly established by Romantic criticism. And without doubt the Romantic conception of *Othello* is mainly taught in schools and colleges today. I believe that this conception is ethically wrong, is weakening to morals and religion; but my present point is that it is dramatically untenable.

Read again the long and beautiful speech in which Othello recounts to the Venetian senate the process of his wooing, summing it all up in the lines:

She loved me for the dangers I had passed,
And I loved her that she did pity them.

Then proceed immediately to Desdemona's confession:

That I did love the Moor to live with him,
My downright violence and storm of fortunes
May trumpet to the world; my heart's subdued
Even to the very quality of my lord;
I saw Othello's visage in his mind,
And to his honours and his valiant parts
Did I my soul and fortunes consecrate.
So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
The rites for which I love him are bereft me,
And I a heavy interim shall support
By his dear absence. Let me go with him.

The significant difference between those two speeches is apparent to a reader or spectator alert for a certain dramatic effect at which Shakespeare drives in the early scenes of his chief tragedies and, indeed, in the majority of his plays — namely, the keynote contrast presented by the hero and heroine. And here as in many of his other plays, though far more poignantly, I think, the contrast turns upon two different modes of love. Pity, no doubt, was a ground of Desdemona's love for Othello. But we cannot imagine her stressing that subordinate emotion in his full and climactic fashion even if she, instead of him, had been asked to explain to the Senate the growth of their affair. Her final statement could not have been that she loved him for the dangers he had passed. Nor on the other hand can we imagine him declaring that his "heart's subdued" to her "very quality", *i.e.*, her inmost nature and character.*

Such an interchange of parts cannot be imagined dramatically. But of course if we give way to idealizing fancy instead of being led by dramatic perceptions, we may feel, with Coleridge, that Othello and Desdemona have in common an "entireness of love" which enables each to speak for the heart of the other with complete authority; as a married couple may have a joint bank-account from which each can freely draw with the full concurrence of the other – under ideal conditions. In this case Othello's speech may be regarded as drawing out all the romantic glamour and pathos of their wooing while, with a fine art of reticence, leaving for his wife the very heart of the story, the fact that each loves the inmost nature of the other with equality of knowledge and consecration. But this fiction is not Shakespeare's; and it overrides the whole theatric scheme of the first act.

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*On several grounds I reject the popular interpretation of "quality" here as profession or vocation.

The act opens and closes with dialogues of Iago and his tool, the foolish Roderigo. In the first scene, the episode of Brabantio serves to bring out dramatically the coarse selfishness of Iago and the thin but, so far, pure devotion of Roderigo for Desdemona. As Roderigo leaves the stage Othello enters; and here we are prepared for what we are made to feel incessantly as the play proceeds, that Roderigo's story is a parody of Othello's, providing relief from it even while illumining it by dramatic suggestion. The suggestion is that Othello's love is touched with the romantic egoism which, so blatant in the case of Roderigo, is potentially so tragic in the case of a great nature like that of Othello. As soon as he enters the scene he stands out above all others. We see his nobility; and we see that his love for Desdemona is potentially noble – potentially, not certainly. For this new relationship presents new difficulties, outward and inward, the like of which he has not previously had to face, and which his self-confidence, fostered hitherto by success, can lead him to underestimate. The outward difficulties are obvious. But Shakespeare also makes clear the inward difficulty, the need of a kind of self-subduing that Othello has not until now been called upon to make. Mainly in connection with his love do we sense that egoism which the words of Iago in the first scene, though obviously biassed, had prepared us to find. We sense it without repulsion because, largely accounted for by the circumstances of his life, it has a natural fitness and charm. Nevertheless we see it more and more plainly as the act goes on; we perceive that it has entered into the very quality of his love. Here we discern a tragic danger.

But we discern it wordlessly. It is not put into words by Iago, though his hints come close to it. In the opening lines of the play he speaks of Othello as "loving his own pride and purposes"; but these words are inspired by Othello's preference of Cassio over Iago for the lieutenancy. Iago does not connect Othello's pride and Othello's love. Indeed he is incapable of so doing. For in his view, as he informs us in the last episode of the act, the love-sentiment exhibited by Othello, as well as by Roderigo, is merely a superficial and changeable mood. He cannot conceive of love as a lasting and inclusive passion wherein self-pride can be a tragic danger. Othello's vulnerability, from the standpoint of Iago, resides in the fact that

The Moor is of a free and open nature,
That thinks men honest that but seem to be so,
And will as tenderly be led by the nose
As asses are.

This passage, coming at the close of the act and wearing a summary air, is certainly meant to strike the audience vividly. The first line wins our instant approval because of what we have seen of Othello. But just for that reason, the third line and the three words that follow, sharply set off by the ensuing metrical blank, arouse our intsant disagreement. We have seen no reason to suppose that Othello will be asininely submissive to the temptings of a creature like Iago — unless — the thought may still be wordless but certainly it is now pressing — unless his love has in it a kind of frailty, as well as a kind of potency, which Iago has not fathomed.

And so one's mind returns to the words of the lovers themselves. Their confessional speeches are spotlighted, so to put it, at the center of the dramatic pattern of the first act; which comprises an extraordinary range of attitudes towards their love, from the outer darkness of Iago to the inner twilight of the good Duke. With the Duke (and with Coleridge) we see that Othello and Desdemona are indeed counterparts in the sense that each is a complement of the other in a union that has the beauty of simplicity, purity, and truth. But we also see, with Shakespeare, that their loves are not counterparts (this word is used by Coleridge with seductive ambiguity) in the sense of being facsimiles. Here, as always when he is at his best, Shakespeare displays a difference of inner quality by a sharp difference between the types of poetic style employed by the speakers. Othello's long speech has the simple-elaborate beauty of what may be called "true-love" romance. An example of the same type on a lower level of value is Coleridge's poem "Love", in which the hero wins his lady by telling her a romantic story concerning himself that "disturbed her soul with pity". But Desdemona's brief confession has the higher and more difficult poetry of a strong, plain, utterly self-giving and penetrating passion. Here the physical and spiritual aspects of love are conjoined with a bold delicacy, a superb rightness, of which Othello's romantic style (see the speech which follows hers) is seen to be quite incapable. In other words Desdemona, and she alone, has that "entireness of love" which Coleridge attributes also to Othello.

The same difference of poetic tone appears in their utterances upon their reunion in Cyprus after the stormy sea passage. Readers who have complained that the beauty of Othello's lines here is damaged by the fantastic image of the climbing and ducking boat –

If after every tempest come such calms,
May the winds blow till they have wakened death!
And let the labouring bark climb hills of seas
Olympus-high, and duck again as low
As hell's from heaven! . . .

should reflect that Shakespeare, consciously or not, may have designed that damage. For he frequently causes an emotionalism of which he is critical to betray itself in just that fashion. Macbeth, also in a speech of dark premonition, works up his feelings to the pitch of a monstrous figure, "tears shall drown the wind". In both cases, though of course far more so in that of Macbeth, the overdone image characterizes an outburst of affection in which there is fateful self-concern. In twelve lines Othello utters no less than seven times the first personal pronoun singular, in one or another of its forms. So that the listener is impelled to underscore the plural number when it appears in Desdemona's simple and intense reply:

The heavens forbid
But that our *loves and comfort should increase*
Even as our *days do grow!*

Othello too, in his next speech, uses the "our", catching it up from her, so it seems, while he catches her again to his breast; from which she had drawn back, half frightened, when she uttered the above lines (such, I think, is the stage business intended here). . . . Continually throughout the play Shakespeare makes a dramatic contrast between Desdemona's unselfish love and the (comparatively, not by any means absolutely) self-centered passion of Othello. And upon that contrast the whole action turns.

In other words this play is a true love-tragedy – not a "true-love" romance with an unhappy ending brought about entirely, or mainly, by "the almost superhuman art of Iago" as Coleridge says. The modern idealization of Iago, as of Milton's Satan, springs from the modern, and often sentimental, cult of unorthodoxy with its admiration of rebels. Iago, according to that cult, is a superb, brainy rebel against our smug rules and gods: he dares to be himself alone! However, this attitude is entirely foreign to Shakespeare. Certainly he is always interested, sometimes comically, sometimes seriously, in flashes of independence. But this quality is not, for him, what it is for many modern writers, a criterion of value. It is a neutral, natural power; like the wind, for example; which we may admire for itself, in a passing fashion, while we are proceeding to the more important recognition of what it does, for good and for ill, to ships and houses and steeples. In this fashion Falstaff, notably, is admired and judged by Shakespeare. For him independence is not really independent; daring to be one's self is not a value isolable, in anything more than a passing manner, from the moral value of that self. And Iago's self-reliant intelligence is certainly less significant in the eyes of his creator than the fateful limitations of that intelligence owing to immoral self-reliance.

Iago's "almost superhuman art" may properly be termed subhuman. This fact the spectator, presumably a person of normal humanity, is intended to see more and more, and to enjoy dramatically, in the last three acts of the play. He is supposed not only to condemn the villain morally but to feel superior to him in insight into the human heart. For the audience has been enabled by Shakespeare in the first two acts to perceive that inward force and danger of Othello's love to which Iago has been entirely oblivious. (Note how different from ours is his reaction to the reunion episode: "O, you are well tuned now!" The tune has for him no *inward* tone of premonition.) So that the violence of Othello's vengeful outburst in the last phase of the great temptation scene in Act III does not surprise the audience as it does Iago. The actor who at this point labors to eliminate Iago's perturbation, by representing it as entirely feigned, runs counter to the plain sense of the lines. Of course the thing can be done if the actor makes the right faces, but Shakespeare would exclaim like Hamlet, "Pox, leave thy damnable faces. . . ." The fact is that Iago, in spite of his ability in adapting himself to the situation, is astounded and dismayed by the force he has helped to unloose. The murder of Desdemona, which Othello determines upon, had never for an instant been contemplated in the villain's plans. He had intended to

> *Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me*
> *For making him egregiously an ass*

And practising upon his peace and quiet
Even to madness . . . .

that is, to such a madness as such "an ass" could have; not the fearful human passion that actually ensues. Iago finds that in order to be thanked, loved, and rewarded, to hear from Othello the coveted words "Now art thou my lieutenant" (in the last line but one of the temptation scene), he must take part in Othello's "black vengeance" with an air of passionate conviction imitated from his master. But he strives to concentre that vengeance on Cassio; whose death – if only it would satisfy the Moor's absurd and bothersome rage – would clinch the success of his plot. Whereas the killing of Desdemona is quite unnecessary – Iago has adduced no evidence which she could disprove – and may well be embarrassing. His plea, "But let her live", means exactly that. And the actor who accompanies these climactic words with a leer of insincerity and intellectual triumph is trying to defeat the legitimate triumph of the audience. We are intended to see, with immense satisfaction, that the villain has overshot his mark. Subdued by his master's violent refusal of his request, he closes the scene with a submissive and dramatic-ironic line, "I am yours forever." For the remainder of the action he is the tool of Othello's passion more than Othello is the tool of his cunning. His self-defeating blindness to the strength of his wife Emilia's love for Desdemona, so brilliantly foreshadowed by the author in the middle of the temptation scene, where the villain appears to be on the crest of fortune's wave, is recognized in the last act as the natural nemesis of one who has failed to fathom the hearts of all the other persons in the play, from Othello down to Roderigo.

Such, I think, is Shakespeare's best intention in the story of Iago. But the fact is that this character is imperfectly drawn. Not all the efforts of his admiring interpreters have succeeded in divesting him of a certain air of staginess. Their subtle lucubrations upon his so-called "motive-hunting" have helped to demonstrate that he is not coherently motivated. For example, if he can suspect the faithfulness of his wife in the past when only his "honor" was at stake, why has he not the faintest presentiment of her defection in the future when his very life is involved? But the truth is that in the former case he is merely providing comic relief for the audience. His two rôles, smart buffoon and "heavy villain", are not well harmonized. No doubt Shakespeare himself was aware of this defect; in his next play, *King Lear*, he remedied it remarkably. Here the rôle of witty buffoon, divorced entirely from plot-function, is assigned to the wise Fool; while Edmund, Iago's direct successor as intriguing villain, is delimited and thoroughly motivated as such.

Certainly Shakespeare uses Iago superbly in the crucial episode of the play, the first part of the temptation scene. But here the main motive force is not Iago's cunning: it is Othello's deficient love. Coleridge's claim – that Othello's conviction of his wife's unfaithfulness is "forced upon him" by Iago and that it is "such a conviction as any man must and would have entertained who had believed Iago's honesty as Othello did" – confutes itself by the stress it places upon the hero's trustfulness. (This point has been made by Professor E. E. Stoll.) For surely the "holy entireness of love" that Coleridge attributes to Othello must comprise trustfulness: the one person whom he will trust above all others, in the present case, is exactly his wife. The one person, above all others, whose suspicions, in the present case, will not be accepted is exactly Iago. For the more his honesty and loyalty are believed in by his master, the more they account for and explain away his suspicions. Iago is a crude, outside witness. His honesty gives him no access to the inside facts of this case. His view of the matter, as Othello sees and says in a moment of normal vision, is properly to be classed with "exsufflicate and blown surmises". The surmise that *sways* Othello is not Iago's but Othello's.

Iago begins by aspersing Cassio, only Cassio, whose conduct has been doubtful and who of course may be guilty of evil intentions without the slightest complicity on the part of Desdemona. The audience waits in great suspense to hear just what the villain can dare to say of *her*. Finally he ventures the following allusion: "Good name in man – or *woman* – dear my lord . . ." (the italics and dashes are of course mine). Ostensibly this clever speech is merely a warning that Cassio may injure Desdemona's reputation and therefore, and above all, filch the good name of Othello. Iago is making a strong appeal to Othello's self-pride, aiming to move him strongly against Cassio; but also hoping, since Cassio's guilt must be incomplete if Desdemona is innocent, to arouse in Othello a suspicion of her virtue. This hope is fulfilled (and here is the very crux of the play) far beyond his expectation, instantly and violently.

Iago for a moment is quite overcome by surprise – such, I think, is the right intent of the stage business; but not so the audience. Like Iago, we have felt all along that Othello's trust in his wife is not impregnable; that it is more assertive than certain, created less by knowledge than by romantic emotion. But, unlike Iago, we have seen what depth of emotion is involved. Othello's final speech in the first act, expressing immense trust in his wife in the face of Brabantio's warning ("She has deceived her father and may thee"), is of course packed with dramatic irony. But the irony is intended to be far deeper for the audience than it is for Iago. He can easily sneer at Othello's confidence because he believes, as he presently declares, that love is "merely a lust of the blood and a permission of the will". He cannot take seriously Othello's exclamation, "My life upon her faith!" But these ringing words, which linger in our minds and in the end turn out to be literally true, convey to us, when they are first uttered, a tragic premonition. From here on, Shakespeare continually suggests three viewpoints regarding the hero's trust in his wife: that of Othello himself, that of Iago, and that of the audience. If Othello's part is properly acted the audience perceives that he has a suppressed anxiety. "Repressed emotion", by the way, is a stock-in-trade device of the Elizabethan stage. Again and again a character is shown to be harboring some good or evil feeling which is less apparent to himself than to the spectators, and which has therefore a strong histrionic effect when it finally breaks forth. Othello's secret fear is fed by a cumulative series of circumstances noted by the audience. And in connection with the drunken brawl supposedly occasioned by Cassio, we are shown the hero's capacity for wrath:

> *Now, by heaven,*
> *My blood begins my safer guides to rule,*
> *And passion, having my best judgement collied,*
> *Assays to lead the way . . . .*

This, occurring as it does towards the end of Act II, immediately prepares for his outbreak early in Act III in regard to Desdemona. The audience is ready both for the violence of the outbreak and for its direction; while Iago is ready for neither. His animus is against Cassio, not Desdemona. We, however, know that it is natural for Othello's mind to subordinate Cassio, instantly and utterly, to the thought of his wife. I do not mean that the audience is not at all taken by surprise; that would be untrue to theatric actuality. Shakespeare gives us here a *prepared* surprise, a sudden, full revelation of what he has hitherto imparted clandestinely; while also giving us the pleasure of Iago's vivid astonishment.

Othello, seizing the startled villain, cries out, "By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts." And when Iago, recovering himself, refuses to disclose them, his master releases him and turns away, brooding upon his *own* thoughts, which are fully revealed by his single exclamation, "Ha!" If the meaning were not unmistakable and if the tone were not one of inner conviction, Iago would not dare in his next speech to translate that monosyllable into the plain terms "jealousy" and "cuckold". These words, if they were Iago's, merely or even mainly, would bring him a blow on the mouth from his master. That situation must have been perfectly clear to the Elizabethan audience; it is clear to any spectator who watches Othello with a dramatic, instead of a sentimental, sympathy. Here, I believe, is the moment of greatest suspense in the play. A strong repudiating gesture on Othello's part is called for, and the fact that it is not forthcoming means that the word "cuckold" is for him merely the verbal echo of the thought that has overcome him. A decisive gesture or word of repudiation would mean that he roots out the evil thing from his mind as soon as he fully faces it. But instead – and only half listening to Iago – he moans to himself, "O misery." The mind that masters him is not Iago's but his own; though certainly the villain is the dramatic instrument for the unloosing of his black thought, his repressed fear. There is no other means by which that thought and emotion could be unloosed so dramatically. A revealing soliloquy uttered by the hero in solitude would have seemed at this important juncture a very weak device. Instead, Shakespeare gives us soliloquy mingled with dialogue – the self-concealing egoism of the hero put into words by the villain, who is egoism incarnate. Here Iago is a brilliant dramatic version of the evil spirit of allegory, who, as in the case of Marlowe's Faustus, appears at the hero's elbow, typifying his worser self. At the same time he is the culmination of a dramatic series of circumstances serving to bring to the fore the deficiency that there is in Othello's love.

Of course, as we have not Shakespeare's promptbook, we cannot be sure of the tones and gestures that he intended in any given episode. But we know that he was impelled to aim at the maximum of histrionic effect, notably at sudden and vivid contrasts. This fact must be our primary guide in our necessary efforts to read between the lines, and I have tried to give it full weight above. Also we know – unless we happen to belong to that current school of sceptical criticism which, with all its corrective virtues, simply fails to account for one's impression of Shakespeare's greatness – we know that, with all his sins, he has the virtue of following in his best plays large and consistent dramatic ideas. Such an one is his conception of the character of Othello. It is not a mental concept or picture separable from the scenes of the play, as older critics were apt to assume; but neither is it merely a histrionic part of those scenes and a mouthpiece for Shakespeare's poetry, as newer critics like to urge by way of reaction from the older ones. Othello lives at once in and above the scene, like the mind of his creator. He is a dramatic idea equally creating, and created by, the lines that he utters – equally, when Shakespeare is at his best. Which he generally is in the case of Othello, but not always. He is sometimes overcome by the dramatist's incessant temptation to "play for the scene" at the expense of the whole idea. Moreover the task which he has here set himself is extraordinarily difficult. Othello is represented as a noble gentleman, by nature loving, constant, free from guile and jealousy, yet prudent and capable. He is not the idealistic or even saintly fool that Romantic criticism, in the upshot, makes him out to be. Shakespeare, following a principle apparent in all his chief creations, wants Othello to be reasonably responsible for his own conduct. Yet he strives for the greatest possible dramatic contrast between what Othello normally is and the evil thing that he does. Othello is "great of heart", in his way, but the kind of love that he has for Desdemona is inadequate for the special test to which it is so swiftly put. This inadequacy, however, is not seen or admitted by the hero himself till near the end of the play. It is never seen clearly and deeply by Iago. Yet it must be seen clearly, and as deeply as possible, by the normal audience. That difficult set of conditions is not always perfectly met; but it is brilliantly fulfilled, as I have tried to suggest, in the central episode of the play.

Here Othello is shown to be mastered by a natural yet sinful and unreasonable doubt of his wife – natural, sinful, unreasonable, in the senses in which those three words would be understood by Shakespeare and (in the year 1605 and perhaps 2005) by the Shakespearean audience. From this first outbreak of jealous passion on the part of the hero, the rest of the play follows. Not that the audience feels here that Othello is surely doomed. There is always the possibility that he will repent before his evil passion leads him to catastrophe. But we see that the chances are against him because of his self-centeredness. Supposing his wife to be really guilty, the hero's rage might well be subdued by sorrow for her and mercy; as in the contemporary play, Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*. But Othello's dominant thought is for his own honor and happiness; even in the attempt which he immediately makes to rise above his jealous obsession. His weak spot, clearly shown in the course of that long speech, is at once played upon by Iago:

I would not have your free and noble nature
Out of self-bounty be abused; look to 't . . . .

This is indeed diabolical cunning: it voices the self-hidden devil of selfishness at work in Othello's breast.

And that devil is echoed pointedly in the first bit of definite "evidence" against Desdemona which the villain now adduces:

She did deceive her father, marrying you;
And when she seemed to shake and fear your looks,
She loved them most.

Othello accepts this sophistry, but we know that he ought to reject it. It serves, with fine dramatic art of retrospection, to recall to our minds the situation in Act I. She did indeed deceive her father, but because of the bold veracity and urgence of her passion for Othello. And if she appeared to fear his looks while really loving them, the explanation was given in her own words, "I saw Othello's visage in his mind." The sense of this great line, if not the very words, is not and cannot be forgotten by the audience; but it is not remembered by Othello because he has never really grasped it. We recall the inadequacy of his account of her love in Act I; and now we see fully the inadequacy, there suggested, of his love for her compared with hers for him. We know that if she were in his present situation, she would not harbor a doubt of him. Thus – to sum up the matter in well-worn technical terms – the crucial scene of the play is recognized by the audience as entirely developed from the initial situation.

Because of Othello's lack of loving penetration, he can now proceed with Iago's aid to consider his wife less as an individual than as a type. That attitude Desdemona could not possibly assume towards him: she could not think of him mainly as a Moorish mercenary general, an "extravagant and wheeling stranger". But now she becomes such a stranger for him. His mind places her in the category of "Venetian wife" and regards as applicable to her the exposition which Iago gives of the misdemeanors of that class. Here particularly, in the Romantic interpretation of him, the hero is a blind fool; but actually he is a noble person blinded by evil jealousy. In his ensuing soliloquy, designed to sum up the action of the scene so far, his passionate self-concern – "if I do prove her haggard . . . I am abused and my relief must be to loathe her" – is displayed as the direct cause of the blindness which permits him in the second half of the speech to break out as follows:

O curse of marriage!
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
And not their appetites . . . .

These words and those that follow are very terrible words for a gentleman such as Othello to use. (Remember that the Shakespearean audience has always in the back of its mind the idea of "the complete gentleman"). They mean that, while thinking of himself as a finely sensitive person, he reduces Desdemona to a coarse and insensitive type. On the stage this speech is utterly unconvincing if the actor brings into it a soft note of shocked affection, "an autumnal tone sweet though in sadness" (as Shelley would say). The speech is the quick utterance of a passion natural and sinful, unreasonable and blinding. Accordingly the histrionic effect is immense when Desdemona herself suddenly enters the scene, even as he is uttering his last black words.

Othello is stunned by the contrast between the actual person, whom he had almost forgotten, and the coarse type alive in his thoughts. He exclaims:

Look! where she comes.
If she be false, O! then heaven mocks itself.
I'll not believe it.

This is a flash of beautiful romantic wonder; it is not a stroke of purifying awe. It is a momentary recrudescence of his former and inadequate kind of confidence in his wife; though this time he does not say, "My life upon her faith!" There is no real insight, no real repenting effort; the whole tone of the lines is otherwise. (This sort of expedient, again, is common in Elizabethan drama, *i.e.*, the contrast between emotion and reality in the speaker, between yearning desire and real insight and effort.) Of course the speech is rich in pathos; accentuated presently by the dramatic irony of the lines that follow upon Desdemona's gentle complaint of his unreadiness for his waiting visitors:

He: *I am to blame.*
She: *Why do you speak so faintly?*
Are you not well?

It may be that here he has an inkling of the truth which he is to see at the end of the play: he is to blame, his imagination is diseased. When she comes close to him with loving concern in her eyes (in the beginning he loved her for pitying his troubles) it may be that for a moment and faintly he sees her mind in her visage, as she from the beginning has seen his visage in his mind. But quickly he yields again to self-pain * and self-pity; the fleeting chance that *her* pity may renew in him the love that it began is past and gone. He turns aside, and will not look in her eyes again. Thrusting away the hand that tries to relieve his pain by binding his brow with the pitiful handkerchief – it is "too little", he says, as he now feels her pity to be – he exclaims roughly and distantly: "Let it alone. Come, I'll go in with you." Surely this episode as a whole means that her lovely personal presence cannot avail to dispel – may even serve to promote, by contrast – the vile impersonal figure of her that is growing upon his imagination.

That evil growth, as the audience perceives, is likely to continue during the dinner for the islanders which Othello now attends with his wife. This offstage episode is therefore justified; in spite of the objection taken by recent criticism, namely, that Shakespeare here evades the task of showing Othello mastered by his jealousy. He is mastered by it already, according to the view given above, before he leaves the stage. In the ensuing interval, as the dramatist uses Iago to tell us, the "dangerous conceit" can "burn like the mines of sulphur"; that is, with hidden but increasing power. It is hidden perforce when he is at dinner with his guests; and hence it breaks out with all the more violence when he returns to the stage alone. His exclamation at this point, "Ha! ha! false to me?", certainly refers to Desdemona, not to Iago, whom he does not at first perceive. But the emphasis is on the "me". In this respect his mental farewell here to Desdemona, for such in effect it is, reads like a horrid mocking echo of his greeting to her in the second act, previously discussed. There the thought of himself was at the center of his premonition; here it is the pivot of his black imaginings:

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*"I have a pain upon my forehead here." The allusion to cuckolds' horns, the "forked plague" that is in Othello's mind, is justified psychologically but not otherwise. It shows how bad Shakespeare can be at his best–and how lucky, since time has worn away the jest, and the horns.

> *What sense had* I *of her stolen hours of lust?*
> *I saw't not, thought it not, it harmed not* me;
> *I slept the next night well, was free and merry;*
> *I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips* . . . .
> *I had been happy* . . . .

Significantly enough, his ensuing farewell to war is the most rhetorical speech that Shakespeare has so far put in his mouth: the bark climbing hills of seas in Act II is out-Heroded here by the "mortal engines whose rude throats the immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit". And it is embedded (see the lines which immediately precede and follow it) in the mad, base fancy, far outrunning any suggestion given by the startled Iago, that his wife may have yielded herself to the "general camp", even to the low "pioners" who dig the mud underneath "the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war".

The demand which Othello now makes for tangible evidence against his wife, and which he repeats continually up to and in the very moment of catastrophe, is never at all dispassionate since he never succeeds in freeing it from intense self-concern. Violent in its first utterance it is shown to be deeply involved with his wrath and his mounting lust for revenge. Soon he cries:

> *I'll have some proof. My* name, that was as fresh*
> *As Dian's visage, is now begrimed and black*
> *As mine own face. If there be cords or knives,*
> *Poison or fire or suffocating streams,*
> *I'll not endure it. Would I were satisfied!*

He is "eaten up with passion", as his echo and interpreter, Iago, now says: he can be "satisfied" with "trifles light as air" by way of evidence. But unlike Iago, the audience understands why Othello cannot be satisfied spiritually, so to speak, except by the death of his wife; which he promises "by yond marble heaven" to accomplish, while he kneels "in the due reverence of a sacred vow" – just after he has cried out for "blood, blood, blood", and just before he closes the scene with "Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her!"

That dramatic contrast between Othello's brutal passion and his spiritual sentiments is followed out relentlessly by Shakespeare. Not that he scorns those sentiments: he portrays them, with sympathy, as potentially noble, but as, in Othello's present state, fatally inadequate and delusive. In Act IV, Scene I, Othello's outcry, "but yet the pity of it, Iago! O! Iago, the pity of it, Iago!", is so sincere and moving that, taken by itself, it would seem to express the heart of a man who could not kill the guiltiest of wives. But his next speech is: "I will chop her into messes. Cuckold *me*!" And in Scene II his pity appears as entirely self-pity in his long speech to Desdemona, "Had it pleased heaven. . . ." This beautiful passage moves us deeply on Othello's behalf even while we realize that the kind of emotion it expresses is effectually preventing him from discovering the truth of his wife. When he declares, with some effort, that he could even bear the affliction of the loss of honor, the "slow and moving finger" of "the time of scorn", we feel that he is approaching the patience of unselfish love, the patience that Desdemona has for him. But he is still far from it, and he turns aside from the way thither when he broods upon his own suffering to the exclusion of any touch of mercy for the supposed sinner who has caused that suffering:

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*"My", from the Folios, rejected by most modern editors in favor of the "Her" of Quarto 2, seems to me the better reading. The preceding lines are:

> *By the world,*
> *I think my wife be honest and think she is not;*
> *I think that thou are just and think that thou art not.*

Iago had been asserting his honesty and had raised the question of the value of honesty in general. "Honesty" in Shakespeare's time could mean chastity, or justness (*i.e.*, uprightness), or honorable name; and Othello in replying to Iago touches successively on those three senses. He says, in effect: My mind is confused, my wife can seem chaste and unchaste, you can seem just and unjust; but (here his selfish passion, after its momentary subsidence, rages again) I do know that *my own name*, hitherto as white as the face of chastity itself, now matches this face of mine, dark by nature, begrimed and black with agony.

But there, where I have garnered up my heart,
Where either I must live or bear no life,
The fountain from the which my current runs
Or else dries up–To be discarded thence!
Or keep it as a cistern for foul toads
To knot and gender in! . . . .

That thought at once rearouses the grim rage, which, though it had softened for a moment, even to tears, is his controlling mood throughout this episode. The episode means that, having tried to find "a drop of patience" (as he says) in some part of his soul, he finds only the sort of patience that is "grim as hell". Presently, after his exit, when Emilia voices her suspicion that some villain has been at work, Desdemona has the simple line: "If any such there be, heaven pardon him!" Here is the accent of true mercy, coming from a heart exercised in the patience of love.

Othello's most elaborate effort at patience comes in the catastrophic scene, where he determines to execute his wife in a mood of pure justice and "heavenly sorrow" – and presently murders her in a fit of unjust, hellish rage. Unjust and hellish even if she were guilty. For the acme of the irony that runs through this dreadful episode is the fact that whereas in the beginning Othello, in a tone of mercy, urges Desdemona to pray for heaven's forgiveness – "I would not kill thy soul" – in the end he refuses her plea for time to say "one prayer". So insistent is Shakespeare in exhibiting the weakness of Othello's spiritual sentiments in the face of his selfish passion.

The one who loves Othello best has to die for his cure. Desdemona is a great dramatic creation in that, apart from her deathless love, she is not great at all. Self-secluded as a maid, "tender, fair, and happy", she finds and adores in Othello the virtues that she lacks; and her growing love is able at the close to endue him with the very virtue that he lacks, a virtue above his virtues. He is a great person who becomes obsessed by an evil spirit; she is a small person who becomes possessed of the spirit of redeeming love. Coleridge's question, "As the curtain drops, which do we pity the most?", does not really arise, so entirely is the emotion of pity subjected here to awe, awe in the presence of judging and transforming love. This experience, so familiar in the literature of the seventeenth century, is dulled and confused by the Romantic idealization of Desdemona. Shakespeare certainly intends a very dramatic contrast between what she is and what love does through her. This love is very human and yet it is supernal. Lyrically touched in the sonnets – "eternal love in love's fresh case . . . the star to every wandering bark" – it touches continually the characters in the plays, but not elsewhere with such invading and cumulative power as in the case of Desdemona. Here illimitable love gradually takes possession of a person who is extremely limited, not just mentally but morally.

Coleridge says that she like Othello is "almost sanctified" by "absolute unsuspiciousness"; but this dictum distorts her no less than it does her huband. Othello is unsuspicious of Iago's allegations because of his evil passion; and he would fain justify that passion by iterating and augmenting his belief in Iago's probity – the very belief which, as shown above, would normally have caused him to reject those allegations. The "honest Iago" of the first two acts is something essentially different from "the fellow of exceeding honesty" etc. created and sustained by Othello's self-delusion. His abnormal credulity culminates when in the final scene he tries to vindicate himself to Emilia for the murder of his wife by asseverating violently his faith in Iago, "My friend, thy husband, honest Iago". Emilia's response, her denunciation of him to his face as a "murderous coxcomb", expresses the feeling of the audience in regard to the vain and fatal nature of his "absolute unsuspiciousness". But of course we do not accept her utter condemnation of him – nor, I would urge, her unqualified approval of her mistress. For all along we have seen Desdemona making blunders that are as effectual as crimes.

Her "absolute unsuspiciousness", so far from partaking of sanctity, is the fruit of moral naïveté which authentic sanctity excludes. And it is condemned, while pitied, by a dramatic audience, by persons aware that in the exacting drama of life conduct has to be judged by its results as well as by its motives. Dove-like innocence disjoined from the serpent's wisdom may be an absolute value in the world of romance; but in the world of drama it can be tragically wrong. Desdemona's fondness for her husband's friend Cassio is as natural as it is pure. But its obstinate ostentatiousness is not only indelicate, it is morally obtuse; so, and tragically so, is her obstinate refusal to face the plain fact of Othello's jealousy. Act III, Scene IV, where this situation is crucially developed, is equally important with the temptation scene which it follows hard upon. The audience knows very well that Desdemona, and only she, can now check Othello's growing evil passion. Instead, she establishes and intensifies it. Her climactic assertion, "Alas the day! I never gave him cause", is at once judged by the audience: it is an unconscious but tragic equivocation. And its sequel is her ambiguous and fatal outcry regarding Cassio in the final scene, "Alas! he is betrayed and I undone."

She and not Iago is the one who next to Othello, though at a long distance, is the cause of the catastrophe. It is this fact and this alone that gives a real alleviation to our blame of Othello. We see that she is his tragic counterpart, that she like him, though so very differently, loves not wisely but too well; which is just another way of saying that the play is a true love-tragedy. Also it is sublime: love, here, is perfected through suffering. And this occurs in Desdemona – such is the point I would stress – before it occurs or could occur in the case of Othello.

Her "holy entireness of love", in Coleridge's superb phrase, does not exist or at least does not fully exist until the very end. Her love, always entire, is at the first far from holy, in the strict sense of this word. Contrary to her immediate predecessor, Isabella in *Measure for Measure*, with whom she has otherwise much in common, she is not "a thing enskyed and sainted" by a religious renouncement. She has a vocation for marriage, in spite of her puzzled father's assertion to the contrary. She woos her chosen one, telling him, before he will venture to utter his own feelings, that she wishes "that heaven had made her such a man". She loves him with a passionate absorption that has at first no touch of the super-earthly. That touch begins to appear in the second half of the play. But Shakespeare keeps it aloof, so to speak, up to the very end; mainly through the exquisite art of the closing episode of the fourth act with its suggestion of Desdemona's pure, full strength of sexual love, a suggestion carried over into the beginning of the final scene. She has no withdrawal from life, no readiness for death; and though she has the patience of love she has no religious meekness in the face of wrongful accusation. The intense personal anger with which she first repudiates Othello's direct charge against her, "By heaven, you do me wrong" – and which he interprets as the assumed indignation of a "cunning whore" – persists when she is dying. She cries out, "Falsely, falsely murdered. . . . A guiltless death I die."

But then, in the very moment of death, when Emilia demands who has done the deed, she breathes: "Nobody – I myself – commend me to my kind lord." And we see that Shakespeare has from the first designed her to die with her lips murmuring that sublime lie. In the beginning she deceived her father to make sure of her lover; in the middle of the story she tried, vainly and foolishly, to mollify her jealous husband by denying the loss of the handkerchief; in the end, with an inspired wisdom of love far above wisdom, she tells a falsehood to save her murderer, her "kind lord". This dying lie is a triple truth: it is a confession, a sacrifice, and a redeeming vision – a confession of the fact that she herself is not free from blame; a self-sacrificing effort to assume the whole guilt, leaving a wounded name behind; above all, a religious vision of the loved one's potential goodness. At the first she saw Othello's visage in his mind; at the last she sees his black deed in the white light of his "very quality" as love would have it to be.

No wonder that her "kind lord" must now exclaim: "She's like a liar gone to burning hell; 'twas I that killed her." He dare not accept *from* her the heavenly mercy which he has denied *to* her – unless he is to lose himself. Which, of course, is just what happens presently: he loses himself to find himself. He does so with the strong aid of the poor, coarse, and despised Emilia; not mainly because of her information against Iago but because she informs Othello against himself, while giving him the example of her devotion to Desdemona:

> *This deed of thine was no more worthy heaven*
> *Than thou wast worthy her. . . .*
> *Thou hast not half the power to do me harm*
> *As I have to be hurt . . . .*

But mainly Desdemona works upon him from within. . . . He repents; he is converted. The center of himself shifts from himself to her, to the love which her dead face now symbolizes for him:

> *when we shall meet at compt,*
> *This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven . . . .*

"This look", of course, is not a look of condemnation; it is the look of love with which she died, commending herself to him. But it makes him judge himself, calling as he does upon devils to whip him "from the possession of this heavenly sight". The "compt", the last judgement, is already present to him. We may say that he is saved as by fire; through his self-damnation he finds the way of purgation. Near the close he says that he wishes to be remembered as one who "threw a pearl away richer than all his tribe": her heart, simpler and narrower than his, was richer far in kind. But now his romantic and egoistic passion is purged and lifted towards her "*holy* entireness of love". His new humility appears in his new name for himself. The man "that was Othello" has discarded his own name, of which he was so proud, and will not mention it again. His name is now simply "one whose subdued eyes" . . . . a phrase of great genius, recalling the "my heart's subdued" of Desdemona's confession before the Venetian senate, while her husband watched and listened but did not comprehend. Now, at once criminal and judge, he is on the point of executing himself in the authority of that senate; and his last sight is her face – "this look of thine". At last he has come to see her visage in her mind, her inmost as well as her outward beauty; and his heart's "subdued" to her very quality.

The "Housing Problem"

Should Living in the City Be Subsidized?

RALPH BORSODI

THE newspapers of New York – and no doubt of our other cities also – have recently been full of housing proposals. One much discussed proposal involves a $100,000,000 bond issue by the State of New York to be used for slum clearance and for rehousing present-day slum dwellers. I have added the clipping about this proposal, "State Aid for Housing", to a large accumulation of clippings with such headings as "Federal Loans at 1% Urged for Housing", "Vast Homes Plan Will be Launched", "To Construct 8,000,000 Low-Cost Houses", "P. W. A. to Write Off 45% of Cost of Housing". An aggressive propaganda in favor of housing proposals of this sort has been carried on for some years now by the National Association for Better Housing, the National Public Housing Conference, the National Conference on Slum Clearance, the Housing Study Guild, and numerous small organizations. Many municipal, state, and federal housing "authorities", bureaus, commissions, and departments have been carrying on a similar propaganda. A very large number of individuals who are interested in this subject have been devoting themselves wholeheartedly to the task.

The men and women who are concerned with housing are in the main disinterested and social-minded. They have already secured large appropriations for housing; they have succeeded in launching a considerable variety of housing projects; they are certain to obtain larger and larger appropriations for partial and complete subsidies for housing unless the whole subject of housing receives a much more fundamental study than that upon which most of their proposals are based. That they will be more successful in the next few years than they have been up to the present time is rendered certain by the fact that there are powerful interests which will profit from government aid to housing; and these interests – ranging from the interests of the professional architects down to the local sub-contractors – will be able to supply those cruder methods of persuading appropriation committees and legislative bodies to which public-spirited persons do not stoop. A combination of this sort – a tacit alliance between businessmen who know exactly what they want and respectable and disinterested men and women of unimpeachable integrity – is irresistible. No other "lobby" can compare with it.

What is the basis of this great drive to make the American public "housing conscious", and to make municipalities, states, and the Federal government join in subsidizing housing? In general, it is based upon two propositions:

First, the facts about the abominable fashion in which most of the city dwellers of the country are housed. The proponents of subsidized housing have amassed facts and figures, have presented them vividly and dramatically, and established beyond the peradventure of a doubt that enormous numbers of theoretically free and independent Americans are housed in conditions which are not only uncomfortable but degrading. There is no need to present any of this material in this article; the facts are indisputable.

Secondly, the drive is based upon equally well substantiated facts which seem to indicate that there is no way of housing these millions of families in anything like decent dwellings except by subsidizing the construction and maintenance of their dwellings. The PWA has accepted this thesis for its public housing projects from the beginning. Its housing program is based upon subsidies either represented by outright grants – forty-five per cent of the total cost – or by subsidies in the form of loans over periods of as long as sixty years, at interest rates as low as one per cent.

Mr. Milton Lowenthal has made one of the most widely quoted studies of the need for such subsidies, for the Housing Study Guild. In 1934, according to Mr. Lowenthal, fifty-two per cent of the non-farm families in the United States had incomes of less than $1,000 per year. All of these families, he believes, should live in houses rent free – the houses will have to be completely subsidized. An additional thirty-three per cent had incomes of from $1,000 to less than $1,700 per year. For these families, housing should be partially subsidized – they should live in houses on which the government pays part of the rent.

According to Mr. Lowenthal there were 13,000,000 families with incomes of less than $1,000 who should be provided with rent-free housing; the subsidy which would be required for this group, he says, should be $30 per month; $360 per year; and for the entire group, the sum of $4,680,000,000 *every year.* In the group with incomes between $1,000 and $1,700 there were 9,000,000 families. These families should receive an average subsidy for rent of $12.77 per month; $153.24 per year, or a total of $1,379,160,000 *every year.* Both groups, which Mr. Lowenthal believes need to have their rents paid, in whole or in part, by the government, in order to be decently housed on these incomes, would have to be given a subsidy *every year* of the modest dimensions of $6,059,160,000.

I do not propose to challenge the validity of Mr. Lowenthal's conclusions. If anything, I think that they represent an understatement of the conclusions which inevitably follow from the premisses which he accepts.

What I want to examine is something much more fundamental than the question of whether an annual subsidy of over six billion dollars is required in order to furnish decent housing to these 22,000,000 non-farm families. What I propose to consider first is the equity of the proposal that anybody's housing should be subsidized.

We may begin by asking, who is to furnish the money for these subsidies? It is obvious that it must be furnished by the tax-payers of the country. Even if we except from consideration (in terms of equity) the large corporate tax-payers and the individual possessors of great fortunes and great incomes (on the ground that they can afford to pay any kind of taxes), there are still left to be considered an enormous number of farm families, income-tax-paying families whose incomes fall in the smaller brackets, home-owning families who pay real-estate taxes, and families of all kinds, paying sales taxes and miscellaneous taxes of many sorts. These families are to be taxed, over and above the amounts which they are now paying, more than six billion dollars *every year* in order to house decently 22,000,000 families living in the urban centers of the United States.

The farmers, for instance, represent less than ten per cent of the total population of the country. Yet, even as it is, they pay twenty per cent of the taxes collected by the 200,000 or more tax-collecting bodies which infest the social body much as fleas infest the body of the average dog. Farmers are foolish enough to provide their own housing; they own farms, or they pay rent out of which the taxes on their farms are paid. The proponents of slum clearance by government grant and urban housing by government subsidy have not, it seems to me, asked themselves whether it is just and equitable that the farmers of the United States should be taxed a single cent in order to provide "decent" housing for people who cannot afford to pay for such housing in urban centers. If they had asked themselves this question, they would have had to lift their eyes from their city streets and to turn them to the nation as a whole. They would have then discovered that farmers are already paying twice as much as their fair share of the total taxes of the nation, and that half of this excess is already being used for the benefit of city dwellers. Farmers are already being robbed for the benefit of the non-farm population. If, in addition, they were made to shoulder one-fifth of a gigantic subsidy to the urban population, they would have to lower still further their standard of living in order that subsidized housing agencies might raise the standard of living of city dwellers and make that higher standard an almost outright gift to them.

All home-owners are tax-payers. There were in the United States, in 1930, 14,002,074 owners of homes, including the farmers above referred to. Of these 7,432,554 owned urban homes; the balance were owners of rural and farm homes.

Even Mr. Lowenthal would be willing to exclude from the total number to be subsidized the approximately seven and a half million who are now home-owners and tax-payers (since they live in private dwellings and are not candidates for "public" housing). This would reduce the total number of families to be subsidized by approximately one-third, but it would not alter by a particle the fact that billions of dollars would still have to be collected from these seven and a half million urban home-owners for the benefit of the subsidized urban home-renters. The monstrous nature of the injustice involved here can be illustrated by assuming a typical case.

Let us assume that there are two men working side by side in an office in New York City, drawing equal salaries. Let us assume that one of them lives in "First Houses", a subsidized housing project of the New York Housing Authority of which Mr. Langdon Post is the earnest and ingenious director. Let us assume that one of these men has bought and is the owner of a modest little bungalow in one of the suburbs, or perhaps even in the city itself, in the Borough of Queens. What now is happening to these two men through the instrumentality of the New

York Housing Authority? Doesn't the plan of subsidizing, in its ultimate incidence, bring about a situation in which the thrifty, enterprising, and tax-paying resident of the city is actually paying a part of the rent of his fellow worker in order that the latter may be furnished decent housing *in the center of New York City?*

This really leads us to the fundamental error in the premisses from which the proponents of subsidized housing all start. One of the basic assumptions which they make is that the families now living in the city, but unable to earn enough money to pay the economic cost of decent residences there, are still entitled to such a residence even though somebody else must be taxed to provide it for them. This assumption has no basis in equity. It hasn't any basis in economics either. It does, it is true, have a basis of justification from the standpoint of some of the owners of city real estate. Keeping up the population of our cities is of value to them. And it is of value to every vested urban interest, from the vested interest of the municipal authorities down to the vested interest of the social agencies which would cease to exist if slums were really cleared out and slum dwellers persuaded to live far out in the country where they could afford either to own a home or to pay the full rent for a decent dwelling.

The basic truth about the housing situation is that city land, city public utilities such as water, streets, sewage, etc., and city costs of constructing decent dwellings are so high that only well-to-do and wealthy families can afford to live in cities. The moment large numbers of people of modest incomes and of small earning power are brought into cities, they are forced to become slum dwellers; they cannot be decently housed on expensive land, furnished expensive utility service, and furnished expensively constructed dwellings without having someone else — the farmer, the home-owner, and the rest of the taxpayers of the country — make up the difference between what they can afford to pay in rent and what it costs to operate these houses.

What those interested in housing ought honestly to ask themselves is whether the real solution for the housing dilemma may not involve the decentralization of population and the easing of the burdens of taxation on farmers and home-owners, rather than subsidizing centralization, still further accentuating the drift to tenantry, and still further handicapping the farmers and home-owners of the nation.

Intimations of Mortality

A Note on the Poetry of Childhood

RUFUS WILLIAM RAUCH

IN THE poetry of childhood, not the poetry of or for children, or the poetry which re-creates the world of childhood, but in the poetry of the adult creative mind which contemplates childhood and seeks to draw out and intensify its significances, there seems to me a profound contrast between the mediaeval and the modern attitude, an opposition which approaches a Christian *versus* romantic termination.

There is probably no ancient or mediaeval poem of established importance which celebrates in a subjective, self-sufficient way the innocence and charm of childhood. Chaucer wrote his *Treatise on the Astrolabe* for "litel Lowis, my sone"; he is concerned with knowledge and intellectual discipline for the boy; we have no attempt from Chaucer the poet to evoke any emotional content from the innocence of childhood. Villon, mediaeval poet-vagabond *par excellence*, may lament and yearn for the snows (and the ladies) of yesteryear; he never sighs for the sweetness of a lost infancy. Dante – it seems a profanation to remind ourselves that he surveys heaven and hell and all between, but in all Dante's cosmos there is no child. Only in the songs of the Nativity and the cognate lovely lullabies of the mediaeval poets is childhood itself the theme; in both kinds, however, the poet's appeal is always direct, dramatic, and objective, never sentimental. The Divine Childhood is of course entirely exceptional, beyond purely human values, since it contains the mysteries both of the Incarnation and of the Redemption; and the secular lullabies too are usually tragic or semi-tragic in their implication.

The great poets of the English Renaissance seem to have avoided the questionable theme of the religious significance of reminiscences of childhood: the subject seems not to have been admitted as valid. Shakespeare's treatment of children is cruel often, pathetic at times, but never sentimental. In the sonnets he may refer to procreation –

And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence

– but only as an assault against the tragic waste of years and the everlasting decay of beauty. Similarly in the powerful "metaphysical" tradition of the early seventeenth century, a minor poet may become briefly magnificent in this very theme of the perpetuation of love through children, but still there is no indulgence of wistful longing for a glory possessed and lost in childhood. Thus Lord Herbert of Cherbury, certainly a minor poet, in his "Ode on a Question Moved, Whether Love Should Continue Forever?" evokes beautiful semi-religious feeling by reference to childhood, not in its own validity but as the fulfillment of love and the starting-point of eternity:

So when one wing can make no way,
Two joinèd can themselves dilate,
So can two persons propagate,
When singly either would decay.

So when from hence we shall be gone,
And be no more, nor you, nor I,
As one another's mystery,
Each shall be both, yet both but one.

This said, in her up-lifted face,
Her eyes which did that beauty crown,
Were like two stars, that having fall'n down,
Look up again to find their place:

While such a moveless silent peace
Did seize on their becalmèd sense,
One would have thought some influence
Their ravish'd spirits did possess.

Here there is an intellectual stuff and an intuition which validates the experience and the poet's emotion, and makes the poem, of which only the concluding stanzas have been quoted, permanently valuable.

Only the modern romantic poet has asked us to consider, to feel, and to value specifically our own memories of childhood, that vague and distant part of ourselves. Or more correctly, he has invited us to experience the values of his own memories of his own childhood, and, carrying the process a step further, with him to posit these values as absolute. The first appearance of this changed attitude toward a universally human theme is probably found in the work of Henry Vaughan, the Silurist, a poet recently and deservedly reclaimed. Vaughan's poem "The Retreat" is now commonly hailed as a remarkable anticipation of the romantic attitude toward childhood, particularly of Wordsworth's famous "Ode," and this emphasis has unduly obscured his essential qualities as a Christian religious poet.

Happy those early days! when I
Shin'd in my Angel-infancy.
Before I . . .
taught my soul to fancy aught
But a white, celestial thought, . . .
When on some gilded cloud or flower
My gazing soul would dwell an hour
And in those weaker glories spy
Some shadows of eternity.

The poem is of thirty-two lines, a well-organized unit, the language simple and the emotion not in disproportion to the thought. But a certain sentimentality is probably heard here for the first time in this subject-matter; Vaughan is disturbingly prophetic of romantic naturalism.

O how I long to travel back
And trod again that ancient track!

In another poem, "Childhood," he opens magnificently,

I cannot reach it; and my striving eye
Dazzles at it, as at eternity. . . .
Quickly would I make my path even
And by mere playing go to Heaven.

There are here suggestions of baptismal innocence and eternal salvation: Vaughan is still in the living tradition of dogmatic Christianity.

The eighteenth century, with its hard wit and satire, its at least partially classical intelligence, left the romance of childhood to be discovered as poetic material by the revolutionaries of 1798. Wordsworth is thought to have marked well a copy of Vaughan's collection *Silex Scintillans* in which the poems quoted appeared in 1655. And Wordsworth's "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" is of course the greatest expression in our literature of the glorification of this theme. The critic, having paid his tribute to the brilliant melody and imagery and emotion of the poem, must, I think, take exception to its content, the very substance of the poem which makes it if anything something more than a brilliant effusion of melody and emotionalism. The poem has been long excessively esteemed; it claims to carry with it a certain religious implication as to the divinity of childhood and the immortality of the soul; it easily seduces into poetic conviction the reader who fails to think as he reads. The poem is not genuinely religious; it provides instead a romantic substitute for religion. It does not of itself nor by virtue of the experience which it re-presents convey any intellectual intimation of immortality and its reading of childhood is fallacious, a wish-fulfillment of the poet's recollections. The child of six at his play is hailed

Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty prophet! Seer blest!

But "shades of the prison-house" of life and knowledge and experience slowly but surely creep over the growing soul to obliterate the clouds of glory of infancy. This is almost to suggest, to put it crudely but not unfairly, that ignorance is bliss, a desiccating conclusion to which romanticism may sometimes lead.

Such epithets as the poet uses, "Nature's Priest", "the eternal deep", "the Eternal Mind", "the eternal silence", are not religious; they are romantic substitutes for religion. And the poet's attitude toward nature itself becomes involved in something like a contradiction:

The Youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;

but in the next stanza,

The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate Man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

That is, in the former instance, the Youth is still in intimate communion with Nature (God?) and trailing clouds of glory from "the east", while in the latter, Nature, the foster-mother (earth is specifically referred to), imprisons Man and destroys the clouds of glory of Youth.

Wordsworth's intimations are vaguely of a preexistence, not of an immortal survival; the romantic idealist, escaping from the ravages of nineteenth-century rationalism and industrialism, reads these intimations into his own memories of what seems to him now to have been the innocence of childhood.

One is reminded of Feste's catechizing of Malvolio, in *Twelfth Night*:

What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild fowl?
That the soul of our grandam might happily inhabit a bird.

What thinkest thou of his opinion?
I think nobly of the soul and no way approve his opinion.

The Romantics too thought nobly of the soul and tried to "save" it; but having lost dogmatic religion, they were forced to discover instead Nature, Revolution, and the Eternal Deep: well enough, and often exquisite poetry resulted, but never *religious*. Moral innocence and immortality are religious subjects.

Discussing the subject-matter of the romantic poets generally, William Empson, a young English critic, in *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, writes:

> Almost all of them exploited a sort of tap-root into the world of their childhood, where they were able to conceive things poetically, and whatever they might be writing about they would suck up from this limited world an unvarying sap which was their poetical inspiration. . . . An imposed excitement, a sense of uncaused warmth, achievement, gratification, a sense of hugging to oneself a private dream-world, is the main interest and material.

This is by no means all that is to be said about the great romantics, but it is a fundamental truth about their work.

Both Vaughan and Wordsworth may have found the attractive poetic idea of pre-existence for the human soul in Plato's *Phaedrus*. But Vaughan, though Platonist, is certainly Christian, in his imagery and in his belief, while Wordsworth is merely romantic and pantheist. For Vaughan life is like a great circle; death is a return to our origin. In Wordsworth's "Ode" there is no hope of return, except in the bare statement of the title, and then only, on the evidence of the poem, a return to the Eternal Silence.

T. S. Eliot in one of his Harvard lectures, published as *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*, said that "the history of every branch of intellectual activity [in the context he is of course concerned with poetic and critical activities] provides the same record of the diminution of England from the time of Queen Anne. It is not so much the intellect, but something superior to the intellect which went for a time into eclipse; and this luminary, by whatever name we call it, has not yet issued from its secular obnubilation." One aspect of this luminary I should say is the doctrine of original sin, both as a profound intuition and as a dogmatic principle of Christianity. And the all-pervasive secularization of modern life and literature is no doubt fundamentally due to the refusal of the modern mind to admit the radical imperfection of human nature, its limited perfectibility only in the supernatural order.

In this connection one of Eliot's own recent poems is significant. "Animula" may be, in the full compass of Eliot's achievement, only a minor poem; with the Nativity poems, and "Marina" and *Ash-Wednesday*, however, it has its place in an intense spiritual reaction which is also a revolution. In "Animula," opening with a tenuous quotation calling to witness the testimony of Dante, the poet contrasts "the simple soul" which "issues from the hand of God" with "the simple soul" that "issues from the hand of time". In the first case, the child finds

Pleasure in the wind, the sunlight and the sea;
Studies the sunlit pattern on the floor
And running stags around a silver tray; . . .
Content with playing cards and kings and queens,

What the fairies do and what the servants say.

until

The pain of living and the drug of dreams
Curl up the small soul on the window seat
Behind the Encyclopaedia Britannica

and the work of time is accomplished:

Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom,
Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room;
Living first in the silence after the viaticum.

It is in the liturgical conclusion that the full effect is made:

Pray for Guiterriez, avid of speed and power,
For Boudin, blown to pieces. . . .
Pray for Floret, slain by the boar behind the yew-tree,
Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth.

In a word, it is the "curse", not of birth itself, but of birth in original sin that makes all the difference, and death, death "in the silence after the viaticum" which is the birth of immortal life.

No lover of poetry, even though he finds in poetry no mere luxury but a sustenance of some necessity, can be so deadly as to demand from every poet in every poem a substance of everlasting value and validity: such a use of poetry would eventuate in contradiction and its self-destruction. But the obverse of this truth is as necessary: the poet, even in lyrical poetry, must provide or imply or assume an intellectual ground reasonable enough to justify the consequent or correlative emotion. In the problem posed here the question is, what is the value, the significance, of childhood, the reasonable basis underlying it? For the doting aunt the child may be a pretty toy, his antics a source of delight and anecdote; for the loving parent a great joy and a great responsibility; for the stern moralist the happy eyes of childhood may betoken a state of innocence lost long ago in Eden; for the poet an occasion for the saccharine tears of reminiscence and yearning. But the romantic and the Christian attitudes are fundamentally, theologically, opposed. The romantic is rooted in naturalism, the innate perfect goodness of human nature, and the consequences are rampant, in education and psychological theory; the Christian is realist and tragic.

The cruel fact is that the innocence and the charming loveliness of childhood are relative and unearned; to posit these qualities as self-sufficient, as the vestiges of an existence antedating birth or promises of a survival after death, as in some way of absolute value for man, is fallacious. The child is not fully human until it has attained "the use of reason", that is, until it has come to a knowledge of the difference between good and evil. Unconscious innocence (or guilt) is non-human, self-contradictory; only what is consciously striven for, through pain and suffering (such is the tragedy of human nature), is lastingly desirable. The suffering of childhood may be pathetic, it cannot for that reason be tragic: the innocence of childhood is indeed beautiful, it cannot be sublime.

There is a very powerful corroboration of these "intimations" of childhood in St. Augustine, Christian Platonist and most poetic of the Church Fathers.

In the *Confessions* he treats the subject of his own childhood with an intensity which seems at first very cruel and even cynical. But it is rather that passionate integrity and curiosity, and that tragic sense of conflict in the innermost reaches of human nature so strong in Augustine, which leads him to the Christian, the realistic conclusion. He suggests the possibility of some pre-existence and speculates about "pre-natal influences":

> Say, Lord, to me, Thy suppliant; say, all pitying, to me Thy pitiable one; say, did my infancy succeed another age of mine that died before it? Was it that which I spent within my mother's womb? for of that I have heard somewhat. . . . And what before that life again, O God, was I anywhere or anybody? For this I have none to tell me, neither father nor mother, nor experience of others, nor mine own memory.

Turning to infancy itself, he says bluntly: "I remember nothing. . . . My infancy died long since, and I live."

But from the evidence of mature introspection and from observation he describes vividly the growth of consciousness in the infant being, the manifestations of instinct and will already somewhat perverse:

> So I flung about limbs and voice, making the few signs I could for what I wished. And when I was not immediately obeyed, then I was indignant with my elders for not submitting to me, with those owing me no service, for not serving me; and avenged myself on them by tears.

His conclusion from his own "intimations" is definitive and unflinching: "Innocence resides not in the infant soul but in the weakness of the infant members." All human nature, from birth and consciousness, is fallen into evil. Only by the mystery of baptism can the relative, pre-conscious innocence of childhood, the innocence of incompleted human nature, be made absolute; and happily baptism may be *de facto* or by desire. For the rest: "Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth."

That is the intimation, the full tragic cry of mortality.

A Debate on Distributism

BERNARD SHAW *and* HILAIRE BELLOC

[*Editor's note.–The following interchange between Bernard Shaw and Hilaire Belloc is reprinted from* G. K.'s Weekly, *the Distributist magazine founded by the late G. K. Chesterton and now edited by Mr. Belloc. It will be observed that in twitting Mr. Belloc, his magazine, and the Distributist League, Mr. Shaw has used the word Distributism in the sense of the wide distribution of* goods, *instead of the wide distribution of* productive property, *the meaning given to the word by Mr. Belloc when he coined it. Mr. Belloc makes this clear in his reply.*]

The Case for Russia

I NOTE with some concern that *G. K.'s Weekly* has become savagely anti-Russian. Now I happen to believe that at this moment, when the monstrous failure of Capitalism to produce reasonable distribution is emphasized by the Ellerman millions, the enemies of Russia are the enemies of the human race. Surely of all our little Societies the Distributist League is the one most bound by its title and principles to support the U. S. S. R., the only honestly and professedly Distributist State in the world. Besides, the U. S. S. R. is making a huge concession to the propaganda of *G. K.'s Weekly*. I do not know whether Stalin has ever read Karl Marx; but he has evidently read Mr. Belloc and been startlingly converted by him; for it is on Stalin's initiative that the new Constitution of the U. S. S. R. declares that "each collective-farm household has for its own use a plot of land attached to the household, and, as individual property, a house, productive livestock and poultry, and minor agricultural implements". This is the greatest political triumph Mr. Belloc has yet achieved; and one looked for a special number of *G. K.'s Weekly* to announce and celebrate it.

Conceive then my astonishment when Mr. Belloc took his success in such bitterly bad part that he repudiated Stalin as a murderous, destructive, and subhuman phenomenon, carrying out the devilish designs of the "gang into which he has married"! This really requires some explanation. It is true that Stalin, a man of the people, knows what an old-style peasant is like, and consequently knows that the first thing a Communist State has to do is to liquidate him as a hopelessly unsocial and superstitious ignoramus, whilst Mr. Belloc, brought up to and at Balliol, is and always will be a cockney idealizer of Hodge. But Stalin's method of liquidation is one that Mr. Belloc cannot possibly object to. The children of the moujik are not being brought up as savages. They are educated and cultivated. Instead of being quite a different sort of animal to the urban proletarian, and an unreasonable obstacle to every change, the Russian peasant is likely to become as bright as, and much more resourceful than, the townsman.

As to Stalin being a murderer with destructive instincts and a dangerous wife, where is the evidence? All the appearances and all the facts indicate that Stalin is not only the ablest, clearest, most commonsensible, most outspoken and honestly public-spirited statesman in Europe, but that his private life and character are irreproachable. I myself can testify to his unaffected kindly good manners, his keen and pleasant sense of humor, his readiness to take a practical suggestion from anybody, and his patience with us Western barbarians. He is, on the face of it, no more murderous and destructive than Mr. Baldwin or General Evangeline Booth. His constructive achievements are the wonder of the world and the dismay of the Capitalism that the Distributist League denounces. Then why in the name of common sense does the press organ of the Distributist League assume without a particle of evidence or a scrap of reasoning that he is a devil incarnate? And why is Mr. Belloc so ungrateful to his greatest convert?

Then there is the Catholic bent of the League. Now there is a sharp distinction between the Catholic Church as a Platonic ideal and as a political force. Platonically, facts do not matter and in effect do not exist. The Church and the Papal theocratic supremacy run in men's minds even when there is no substance corresponding to either. It matters not a Platonic straw whether the actual man in the triple tiara be Saint Peter or Roderick Borgia – whether the village priest be a Vincent McNabb or a Father Dempsey. But politically it makes all the difference in the world. The Church, as the League has to deal with it, is at any moment just what its priests and chiefs make it. From the purely political or Machiavellian point of view the Russian Communist party realizes the ideal of a Catholic Church much more completely than any other religious organization at present to be reckoned with; and it is the only professedly and actively Distributist one.

Also it must be borne in mind that the Roman Catholic Church is an extremely promiscuous body. It embraces Catholics of all sorts. I was brought up in a Roman Catholic country; and I know. I do not challenge the validity of G. K. C.'s Catholicism or Mr. Belloc's; but they could have worked much more easily with a gang of Freethinkers than with a sodality of typical Irish peasants. The Catholic Archbishop of Thurles once said that his flock consisted of four thousand sturdy Tipperary Catholics, Cromwellian Covenanters to the last man.

By far the most formidable sort of Catholic in politics is the self-dedicated servant of his Church, who is often an atheist without knowing it. His writings (when he writes) are full of his Church. His enemies are the enemies of his Church. His history (if he is a historian) is the history of the crimes and miseries which have followed the abandonment and plundering of his Church. But of the persons of the Trinity and the Atonement not a word. You have only to compare mediaeval literature, or the modern letters written by African tribesmen to the missionaries who have converted them, to detect at once the nineteenth-century Lucretian atheist behind the Churchman.

Unfortunately there are several Churches, notably for our purposes the Roman Catholic, the Anglican Catholic or Church of England, the Greek Church, the Mohammedan Church (Islam), the Hebrew Church (Israel), and the Communist Party. They regard each other as heretics and are apt to try to impose their antipathies on the Distributist movement, scattering it and taking its members off the highway down Bunyanic byways that lead to danger and destruction. Now I am a Distributist, not first and last, for every man's mind can reach beyond the bread-and-butter question; but certainly first, because until every man has a roof for his head and a sufficiently stocked larder, he can think of nothing else, whether he be Christian, Jew, pagan, atheist, Protestant, Catholic, republican, or monarchist. The slogan of Karl Marx, "Proletarians of all lands, unite", is fundamental in the Distributist cause because, having all similar and equal bellies, we have a common and equal interest in the distribution of the wherewithal to fill them. Not until our bellies are full can we turn our minds to transubstantiation or republicanism or Communism or atheism or vaccination or teetotalism or anything else. And when wealth is fairly distributed as a matter of course there will be no occasion for a Distributist League. But until then the League must stick to its point and resolutely refuse to allow itself to be made the cockpit for all other causes under the sun.

Now the difficulty with a press organ of Distributism or any other simple ism is that if a paper keeps on saying the same thing and nothing else, nobody will read it. *G. K.'s Weekly* was readable because G. K. C. and Mr. Belloc were all over the shop on every subject on earth except Distributism, to which they never alluded. Exactly what G. K. C. wanted politically no man could discover, because he had never brought it down to tin tacks for himself. Mr. Belloc is more definite: he advocates, and perhaps really wants, a community of Catholic peasant-proprietors governed by a Catholic Church and a Catholic monarch, all of them furiously anti-Red. Substitute the Church of England for the Catholic Church and you have the politics of Dr. Inge. But neither Mr. Belloc nor Dr. Inge has ever tackled the question of distribution. Probably they never will. The rest of the staff of the paper are equally irrelevant: they do their best to be as amusing and various as G. K. C., with the result that the paper is readable; but you may read it for years, as I have, without gathering any political doctrine from it except that we must be anti-Red at all costs. And anti-Reddism is not only anti-Distributism, but an infallible symptom of political folly into the bargain. It needs no very subtle diplomacy to understand that unless Britain and France throw all their fighting weight and moral support on the side of Russia, the new Fascist belt round the middle of Europe, allied with Japan, may be tempted to organize a crusade to dismember Russia and restore Capitalism there: in short, make an end of Distributism. The result would be the dismemberment, not of the U. S. S. R., but of the British Empire.

Had not the paper better clear its mind and define its aims to help itself to recover from the shock of its founder's death?

G. B. S.

A Letter to Bernard Shaw

My Dear Shaw,

Let me begin by throwing at you a Floral Tribute which conceals no brick. You have two qualities as a writer, wit and clarity; as a man one most eminent quality, the hunger and thirst after justice. These three qualities are so rarely found in combination that your possession of them has made you very properly a leader among your own people. By the words "your own people" I mean the people who hold the same philosophy as yourself.

Now for the snag. Though you hold in unique combination these three excellencies, you lack one possession which is essential to social philosophy, and that is an understanding of the common man. It is therefore my business in answering you to show you how the common man is served by our intention, but disserved by yours: how those who would restore property where it has been destroyed (as it has been destroyed in England) serve the common man; while the contrary efforts of Capitalism and Communism (which is Capitalism's twin brother) disserve him.

You have made out a perfect plea for Communism as a remedy for Capitalism. Communism is that undoubtedly; just as suicide is a remedy for worry or prohibition for drunkenness. But though Communism is the obvious solution of the evils of competition, yet as an Eminent Personage has recently remarked (in Latin) "the remedy is worse than the disease".

Talking of that Eminent Personage, I cannot too much applaud your preoccupation with theology — yet I propose in these brief presents to leave theology out. It is the Queen of Sciences, as you have rightly discovered. It is the key to all controversy that differences in the theology are the bases of all differences in culture. Nevertheless, let us leave it out just now and here, in order that we may concentrate the better on our definite problem; whether property should be rescued from the clutches of Capitalism and restored, or destroyed by Communism. In the Southern states of America, where the cooking is excellent, much the greater part of good cooks are black. Nevertheless, if you are discussing with a Virginian the pros and cons of cooking in the drawing room, the color question is better left out.

What you tell us of Communism as a remedy to Capitalism has, of course, been said a thousand times – though you say it more clearly than most. In saying it, however, you introduce certain errors with regard to our attitude – which attitude is only that of the mass of mankind.

For instance (to take one detail) you think we have some special hatred of M. Stalin. I have felt none such. No doubt if I met him I might rather like him. His face is not unattractive.

Further you have confused the point upon his political origins. We insist upon his marriage because it explains his acceptation by the small group which today despotically governs the Russians. He is evidently a man of the sort common enough in all forms of public life. He is full of energy and he wants to expend his energy in arranging human affairs and getting well into the limelight, at the same time. He may or may not want what most politicians want when they have thrust themselves forward, money as well as limelight. Anyhow, he is obviously of the politician sort, and politicians get into their saddles by intrigue, by inheritance, by purchase – but also by marriage. *He* got in by marriage.

It is relevant to talk of Stalin's marriage because it is an example of the kind of thing now governing Russia. If I allude to the marriage of the professional politician Snooks, pointing out that Lady Snooks was the daughter of the millionaire Minister of Fine Arts, I do so, not to attack poor Snooks, still less to weary Mother Snooks with my impertinence, but to explain to the poor dupes who call parliamentary government "democracy" that it is nothing of the sort.

However, these little points are only personal misunderstandings, the big thing is your misunderstanding of our political doctrine; oh! ye generous but sadly isolated, desiccated, and inhuman Communists!

Let it be taken as a basis of the whole thing that we are *not* occupied in distributing purchasing power or income or cottages with little bits of garden. We are out for a better distribution of *Property*.

We are not particularly concerned with the peasant except as an example of solid property in action.

Here again there is a personal misunderstanding. I find continually, in highbrow quarters, your accusation that people like myself and my friends (and particularly the Founder of this paper) go in for an ideal peasant, very different from the real thing. Well, I have come intimately across peasants all my life. I worked on a farm for a year of my life and did so on my own land off and on for many years. I can plow, or at least I could when I was young (it is rather like steering a boat in a kicking sea). I learned also to reap in the old-fashioned manner and I was taught the difficult art of broadcast sowing. Also I spent a happy year of my life with peasants in a barrack room. But that is by the way, and only to show that if I love a peasantry I also know it.

I say again neither I nor any of those with whom I work are primarily concerned with the Peasant because he happens to till the land, but only with the principal of Property, in which all peasants are rooted and which we regard as normal and necessary to man. We are as much concerned with carpenters and with builders as with peasants; with traders, where the trade is duly limited and human, with craftsmen of every kind. We are concerned with men's possessing, as individuals and heads of families, the instruments of their trade, their homes, and some share in rents and profits. We are concerned with this as an object vital and central in all political effort, because we believe that, lacking property, men fall into slavery.

A way of putting it which will be irritating to you, but to which I beg you to become accustomed, is this: "Property is normal to Man." Property is a function of normal humanity.

We all know by heart from weary repetition the false doctrine that there is no such thing as a thing; that all things merge into all other things. It was the great discovery of the suburban intelligentsia a lifetime ago, and they cling to it still. We do not. We think that there is such a thing as a Man, and that Man is quite different from anything else. We think that a completed type is stable, and that therefore the nature of man is stable. There are of course deflections from the normal; variation is possible within limits; but push it too far and you distort and torture the object of your experiment. In analyzing any human thing you must analyze it in terms of normal humanity. In proportion as you abandon that rule you approach the absurd or the insane and in proportion as you try to put into practice absurd and insane doctrines you approach the Pit.

In the Communist analysis of human society a false view is taken, not because the actual statement is false, but because the line of analysis is abnormal. A man can analyze his mother in any one of fifty different ways. He may regard her Biologically, Gynaecologically, Pathologically, Chemically, Philoprogentivically. If he is a Communist, he will probably find a still longer word along the lines of which to analyze his parent. But the normal and human way to regard one's mother is something very different, and if you regard her after some fashion not human and not normal you will fall into cruelty and folly.

So it is with Property. You can analyze the social functions of men along any one of fifty different lines. Thus, you may talk about "solving the problem of Distribution", or "the problem of Production", or the "problem of Organization", but, if in this talk you forget that man desires to own and desires to own in order that he may be free, and desires to be free in order that he may fulfill his end and conform with his nature, then you make man the mere subject of an experiment in some inhuman theory; you warp and you destroy, as do those who twist bones or cut arteries. You even fail to understand that so far from Property breeding competition and making men enemies one of another, it is only preserved by customs and laws restraining competition.

We are not, as you strangely imagine, exceptions. We are not a little coterie or clique. We speak for what is everywhere the ordinary man, the normal man, the man attempting to fulfill his being and to live consonantly with the instincts native to him and to enjoy them in their right proportion. If we meet an Englishman who is hungry we propose for him a grilled rumpsteak and a pot of beer. You may blame us, crying out that we are monsters, being neither vegetarian nor prohibitionist. We admit the charge that we allow beef and beer; but quite certainly the hungry Englishman will be on our side and against yours.

So it is with the Restoration of Property. Our great chance lies precisely in this, that we are appealing to the common man; and it is just possible (I do not think it is likely) that even in this last disgusting stage of Capitalist decay, in this final mortal phase of urban industrial Capitalism which has battened on the dead body of property, we shall, in some small degree, raise Property from the dead. Attempt, I pray you, to understand of us what the Poet says of his own Tribe:

. . . Some part of that strong mastery
Which though we falter, fail, and die
Upholds and glorifies our trade: –
The Power to make, and judge things made.

H. BELLOC

What Is the Use of Art Anyway?

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

WE ARE familiar with two contemporary schools of thought about art. We have on the one hand a very small self-styled élite which distinguishes "fine" art from art as skilled manufacture, and values this fine art very highly as a self-revelation or self-expression of the artist; this élite, accordingly, bases its teaching of aesthetic upon style, and makes the so-called "appreciation of art" a matter of the manner rather than of the content or true intention of the work. These are our Professors of Aesthetics and of the History of Art, who rejoice in the unintelligibility of art at the same time that they explain it psychologically, substituting the study of the man himself for the study of the man's art; and these leaders of the blind are gladly followed by a majority of modern artists, who are naturally flattered by the importance attached to personal genius.

On the other hand we have the great body of plain men who are not really interested in artistic personalities, and for whom art as defined above is a peculiarity rather than a necessity of life, and who have, in fact, no use for art.

And over against these two classes we have a normal but forgotten view of art, which affirms that art is the making well, or properly arranging, of anything whatever that needs to be made or arranged, whether a statuette, or automobile, or garden. In the Western world, this is specifically the Catholic doctrine of art; from which doctrine the natural conclusion follows, in the words of St. Thomas, that "there can be no good use without art". It is rather obvious that if things required for use, whether an intellectual or a physical use, or under normal conditions both, are not properly made, they cannot be enjoyed, meaning by "enjoyed" something more than merely "liked". Badly prepared food, for example, will disagree with us; and in the same way autobiographical or other sentimental exhibits necessarily weaken the morale of those who feed upon them. The healthy patron is no more interested in the artist's personality than he is in his tailor's private life; all that he needs of either is that they be in possession of their art.

The present remarks are addressed to the second kind of man defined above, *viz.*, to the plain and practical-minded man who has no use for art, as art is expounded by the psychologists and practised by most contemporary artists, especially painters. The plain man has no use for art unless he knows what it is about, or what it is for. And so far, he is perfectly right; if it is not about something, and not for anything, it *has* no use. And furthermore, unless it is about something *worth while* – more worth while, for example, than the artist's precious personality – and for something worth while to the patron and consumer as well as to the artist and maker, it has no *real* use, but is only a luxury product or mere ornament. On these grounds art may be dismissed by a religious man as mere vanity, by the practical man as an expensive superfluity, and by the class thinker as part and parcel of the whole bourgeois fantasy. There are thus two opposite points of view, of which one asserts that there can be no good use without art, the other that art is a superfluity. Observe, however, that these contrary statements are affirmed with respect to two very different things, which are not the same merely because both have been called "art". Let us now take for granted the historically normal and orthodox view that, just as ethics is the "right way of doing things", so art is the "making well of whatever needs making", or simply "the right way of making things"; and still addressing ourselves to those for whom the arts of personality are superfluous, ask whether art is not after all a necessity.

A necessity is something that we cannot afford to do without, whatever its price. We cannot go into questions of price here, beyond saying that art need not be, and should not be, expensive, except to the extent that costly materials are employed. It is at this point that the crucial question arises of manufacture for profit versus manufacture for use. It is because the idea of manufacture primarily for profit is bound up with the currently accepted industrial sociology that things in general are not well made and therefore also not beautiful. It is the manufacturer's interest to produce what we like, or can be induced to like, regardless of whether or not it will agree with us; like other modern artists, the manufacturer is expressing himself, and only serving our real needs to the extent that he *must* do so in order to be able to sell at all. Manufacturers and other artists alike resort to advertisement: art is abundantly advertised in schools and colleges, by "Museums of Modern Art", and by art dealers; and artist and manufacturer alike price their wares according to what the traffic will bear. Under these conditions, as Mr. Graham Carey has so well expressed it, the manufacturer works in order to be able to go on earning; he does not earn, as he ought, in order to be able to go on manufacturing. It is only when the maker of things is a maker of things by vocation, and not merely holding down a job, that the price of things approximates to their real value; and under these circumstances, when we pay for a work of art designed to serve a necessary purpose, we get our money's worth; and the purpose being a necessary one, we *must* be able to afford to pay for the art, or else are living below a normal human standard; as most men are now living, even the rich, if we consider quality rather than quantity. Needless to add, the workman is also victimized by a manufacture primarily for profit; so that it has become a mockery to say to him that hours of work should be more enjoyable than hours of leisure; that when at work he should be doing what he likes, and only when at leisure doing what he ought – workmanship being conditioned by art, and conduct by ethics.

Industry without art is brutality. Art is specifically human. None of those primitive peoples, past or present, whose cultures we affect to despise and propose to amend, has dispensed with art; from the stone age onwards, everything made by man, under whatever conditions of hardship or poverty, has been made by art to serve a double purpose, at once utilitarian and ideological. It is we who, collectively speaking at least, command amply sufficient resources, and who do not shrink from wasting these resources, who have first proposed to make a division of art, one sort to be barely utilitarian, the other luxurious, and altogether omitting what was once the highest function of art, to express and to communicate ideas. It is long since sculpture was thought of as "the poor man's book". Our very word "aesthetics", from *aesthesis*, "feeling", proclaims our dismissal of the intellectual values of art.

If we called the plain man right in wanting to know what a work is about, and in demanding intelligibility in works of art, he is no less certainly wrong in demanding likeness and altogether wrong in judging works of ancient art from any such point of view as is implied in the common expressions, "that was before they knew anything about anatomy", or "that was before perspective had been discovered". Art is concerned with the nature of things, and only incidentally, if at all, with their appearance; by which appearance the nature of things is far more obscured than revealed. It is not the artist's business to be fond of nature as effect, but to take account of nature as the cause of effects. Art, in other words, is far more nearly related to algebra than to arithmetic, and just as certain qualifications are needed if we are to understand and enjoy a mathematical formula, so the spectator must have been educated as he ought if he is to understand and enjoy the forms of communicative art. This is most of all the case if the spectator is to understand and enjoy works of art which are written, so to speak, in a foreign or forgotten language; which applies to a majority of objects in our museums.

This problem presents itself because it is not the business of a museum to exhibit contemporary works.

The modern artist's ambition to be represented in a museum is his vanity, and betrays a complete misunderstanding of the function of art; for if a work has been made to meet a given and specific need it can only be effective in the environment for which it was designed, that is to say in some such vital context as a man's house in which he lives, or in a street, or in a church, and not in any place the primary function of which is to contain all sorts of art.

The function of an art museum is to preserve from destruction and to give access to such ancient works of art as are still considered, by experts responsible for their selection, to be very good of their kind. Can these works of art, which were not made to meet his particular needs, be of any use to the plain man? Probably not of much use at first sight and without guidance, nor until he knows what they are about and what they were for. We could rather wish, although in vain, that the man in the street had access to such markets as those in which the museum objects were originally bought and sold at reasonable prices in the everyday course of life. On the other hand, the museum objects were made to meet specific human needs, if not precisely our current needs; and it is most desirable to realize that there have been human needs other than, and perhaps more significant than, our own. The museum objects cannot indeed be thought of as shapes to be imitated, just because they were not made to suit our special needs; but in so far as they are good of their kind, as is presupposed by the expert selection, there can be deduced from them, when considered in relation to their original use, the general principles of art according to which things *can* be well made, for whatever purpose they may be required. And that is, broadly speaking, the major value of our museums.

Some have answered the question "What is the use of art?" by saying that art is for art's sake; and it is rather odd that those who thus maintain that art has no human use should at the same time have emphasized the value of art. We shall try to analyze the fallacies involved.

We referred above to the class thinker who has no use for art, and is ready to dispense with it as being part and parcel of the whole bourgeois fantasy. If we could discover such a thinker, we should indeed be glad to agree with him that the whole doctrine of art for art's sake, and the whole business of "collecting" and the "love of art" are no more than a sentimental aberration and means of escape from the serious business of life. We should be very ready to agree that merely to cultivate the higher things of life, if art be such, in hours of leisure, obtained by a further substitution of mechanical for manual means of production, is as much a vanity as the cultivation of religion for religion's sake on Sundays only could ever be; and that the pretensions of the modern artist are fundamentally wishful and egotistic.

Unfortunately, when we come down to the facts, we find that the social reformer is not really superior to the current delusion of culture, but only angered by an economic situation which seems to deprive him of those higher things of life which the wealthy can more easily afford. The workman envies, far more than he sees through, the collector and "lover of art".

The wage-slave's notion of art is no more realistic or practical than a millionaire's: just as his notion of virtue is no more realistic than that of the preacher of goodness for goodness' sake. He does not see that if we need art *only if and because we like art*, and ought to be good *only if and because we like to be good*, art and ethics are made out to be mere matters of taste, and no objection can be raised if we say that we have no use for art because we do not like it, or no reason to be good because we prefer to be bad.

The subject of art for art's sake was taken up the other day by an editor of *The Nation*, who quoted with approval a pronouncement by Paul Valéry to the effect that the most essential characteristic of art is *uselessness*, and proceeded to say that "no one is shocked by the statement that 'virtue is its own reward' . . . which is only another way of saying that virtue, like art, is an end in itself, a final good". The writer also pointed out that "uselessness and valuelessness are not the same things"; by which, of course, he meant, "are not the same thing". He said further that there are only three motives by which an artist is impelled to work, *viz.*, either "for money, fame, or 'art' ".

We need not look farther for a perfect example of the class thinker stupefied by what we have called the whole bourgeois fantasy. To begin with, it is very far from true that no one is shocked by the statement that "virtue is its own reward". If that were true, then virtue would be no more than the self-righteousness of the "unco guid". That "virtue is its own reward" is actually in direct opposition to all orthodox teaching, where it is constantly and explicitly affirmed that virtue is a means to an end, and not itself an end; a means to man's last end of happiness, and not a part of that end. And in just the same way in all normal and humane civilizations the doctrine about art has been that art is in the same way a means, and not a final end.

For example, the Aristotelian doctrine that "the general end of art is man" was firmly endorsed by the mediaeval Christian encyclopaedists; and we may say that all those philosophical and religious systems of thought from which the class thinker would most like to be emancipated are agreed that both ethics and art are means to happiness, and neither a final end. The bourgeois point of view to which the social reformer in point of fact assents is sentimental and idealistic; while the religious doctrine which he repudiates is utilitarian and practical! In any case, the fact that a man takes pleasure, or may take pleasure, in doing well or in making well, does not suffice to make of this pleasure the purpose of his work, except in the case of the man who is self-righteous or that of the man who is merely a self-expressionist: just as the pleasure of eating cannot be called the final end of eating, except in the case of the glutton who lives to eat.

If use and value are not in fact synonymous, it is only because use implies efficacy, and value may be attached to something inefficient. Augustine, for example, points out that beauty is not just what we like, because some people like deformities; or in other words, value what is really invalid. Use and value are not identical in logic, but, in the case of a perfectly healthy subject, coincide in experience; this is admirably illustrated by the etymological equivalence of German *brauchen*, "to use", and Latin *frui*, "to enjoy".

Nor can money, fame, or "art" be called explanations of art. Not money, because aside from the case of manufacture primarily for profit instead of for use, the artist by nature, whose end in view is the good of the work to be done, is not working in order to earn, but earning in order to be able to go on being himself, *viz.*, to be able to go on working as that which he is by nature; just as he eats to be able to go on living, rather than lives to be able to go on eating. As to fame, it need only be pointed out that the greater part of the greatest art of the world has been produced anonymously, and that if any workman has only fame in view, "any proper man ought to be ashamed for good people to know this of him". And as to art, to say that the artist works for art is an abuse of language. Art is that *by* which a man works, supposing that he is in possession of his art and has the habit of his art; just as prudence or concience is that by which he acts well. Art is no more the end of his work than prudence the end of his conduct.

It is only because under the conditions established in a system of production primarily for profit rather than for use we have forgotten the meaning of the word "vocation", and think only in terms of "jobs", that such confusions as these are possible. The man who has a "job" is working for ulterior motives, and may be quite indifferent to the quality of the product, for which he is not responsible; all that he wants in this case is to secure an adequate share of the expected profits. But one whose vocation is specific, that is to say, who is naturally and constitutionally adapted to and trained in some one or another kind of making, even though he earns his living by this making, is really doing what he likes most; and if he is forced by circumstances to do some other kind of work, even though more highly paid, is actually unhappy. The vocation, whether it be that of the farmer or the architect, is a function; the exercise of this function as regards the man himself is the most indispensable means of spiritual development, and as regards his relation to society the measure of his worth. It is precisely in this way that, as Plato says, "more will be done, and better done, and with more ease, when everyone does but one thing, according to his genius; and this is justice to each man in himself". It is a tragedy of a society industrially organized primarily for profit that this justice to each man in himself is denied him.

The basic error in what we have called the illusion of culture is the assumption that art is something to be done by a special kind of man, and particularly that kind of man whom we call a genius. In direct opposition to this is the normal and humane view that art is simply the right way of making things, whether symphonies or aeroplanes. The normal view assumes, in other words, not that the artist is a special kind of man, but that every man who is not a mere idler and parasite is necessarily some special kind of artist, skilled and well contented in the making or arranging of some one thing or another according to his constitution and training.

Works of genius are of very little use to humanity, which invariably and inevitably misunderstands, distorts, and caricatures their mannerisms and ignores their essence. It is not the genius, but the man who can produce a masterpiece, that matters. For what is a masterpiece? Not, as commonly supposed, an individual flight of the imagination, beyond the common reach in its own time and place and rather for posterity than for ourselves; but by definition, a piece of work done by an apprentice at the close of his apprenticeship and by which he proves his right to be admitted into the full membership of a guild, or as we should now say trade-union, as a master workman. The masterpiece is simply the proof of competence expected and demanded from every graduate artist, who is not permitted to set up a workshop of his own unless he has produced such proof. The man whose masterpiece has thus been accepted by a body of practising experts is expected to go on producing works of like quality for the rest of his life; he is a man responsible for everything he makes. The whole thing lies in the normal course of events, and so far from thinking of masterpieces as merely ancient works preserved in museums, the adult workman ought to be ashamed if anything he makes falls short of the masterpiece standard or is less than fit to be exhibited in a museum.

Genius inhabits a world of its own. The master craftsman lives in a world inhabited by other men; he has neighbors. A nation is not "musical" because of the great orchestras that are maintained in its capitals, and supported by a select circle of "music-lovers", nor even because such orchestras offer popular programs. England was a "nest of singing birds" when Pepys could insist on an under parlormaid's ability to take a difficult part in the family chorus, failing which she would not be engaged. And if the folk-songs of a country are now collected between the covers of books, or as the singer himself expresses it "put in a bag", or if in the same way we think of art as something to be seen in a museum, it is not that something has been *gained*, but that we know that something has been *lost*, and would fain preserve its memory.

There are, then, possibilities of "culture" other than those envisaged by our universities and great philanthropists, and possibilities of accomplishment other than those that can be displayed in drawing rooms. We do not deny that the class thinker may be perfectly justified in his resentment of economic exploitation: as to this it will suffice to point out once and for all that "the laborer is worthy of his hire". But what the class thinker, as a man, and not merely in his obvious rôle of exploitee, ought to demand but hardly ever dares to demand is a human responsibility for whatever he makes. What the trade-union should require of its members is a master's accomplishment. What the class thinker who is not merely an underdog, but also a man, has a right to demand is, neither to have less work to do, nor to be engaged in a different kind of work, nor to have a larger share in the cultural crumbs that fall from the rich man's table, but the opportunity to take as great a pleasure in doing whatever he does for hire as he takes in his own garden or family life; what he should demand, in other words, is the opportunity to be an artist.

No civilization can be accepted that denies him this.

With or without machines, it is certain that work will always have to be done. We have tried to show that while work is a necessity, it is by no means a necessary evil, but in case the workman is a responsible artist, a necessary good. We have spoken so far from the workman's point of view, but it need hardly be added that as much depends on the patron as upon the artist. The workman becomes a patron as soon as he proceeds to buy for his own use. And to him as consumer we suggest that the man who, when he needs a suit, does not buy two ready-made suits of shoddy material, but commissions a skilled tailor to make one suit of fine material, is a far better patron of art and better philanthropist than the man who merely acquires an old master and gives it to the nation. The metaphysician and philosopher are also involved: it should be a primary function of the Professor of Aesthetics to break down the superstition of "Art", and that of the "Artist" as a privileged person, of another sort than ordinary men.

What the exploitee should resent is not merely the fact of social insecurity, but the position of human irresponsibility that is forced upon him under conditions of manufacture primarily for profit. He has to realize that the question of the ownership of the means of production is primarily of spiritual significance, and only secondarily a matter of economic justice or injustice. In so far as the class thinker proposes to live by bread alone, or even with cake, he is neither better nor wiser than the bourgeois capitalist whom he affects to despise; nor would he be any happier at work by an exchange of many masters for few. It makes but little difference whether he proposes to do without art, or to get his share of it, so long as he consents to the inhuman deification of "Art" implied in the expression "art for art's sake". It is no more conducive to man's last, and present, end of happiness that he should sacrifice himself on the altar of "Art", than for him to sacrifice himself on the altars of a personified Science, State, or Nation.

On behalf of every man we deny that art is for art's sake. On the contrary, "industry without art is brutality", and to become a brute is to die as a man. It is a matter of cannon fodder in either case; it makes but little difference whether one dies in the trenches suddenly or in a factory day by day.

The Return to Feudalism

RALPH ADAMS CRAM

IN *The End of Our Time* Nicholas Berdyaev (that great Russian philosopher) declares with conviction the proximate return of the "New Middle Ages". He says, to quote a few phrases from an essay that is pregnant with shocks and suggestions:

> The very substance of my philosophy is to have nothing at all to do with the thought of times which, so far as I am concerned, are over and done with. I look to the thought of a world which is to begin, the world of the new Middle Ages. . . . What I call the new Middle Ages is the epoch which the rhythm of history brings after yesterday; it is the passage from modern rationalism to an irrationalism, or better, to a super-rationalism of the mediaeval type. . . . The experience of modern times does not allow us to go back to the old Middle Ages but only forward to a new Middle Age. . . . The world is undergoing a gigantic revolution; not the communist revolution, which, at bottom, is everything that is most reactionary, a mess of all the rotten elements of the old world, but a true spiritual revolution. The call to a new Middle Age is a call to this spiritual revolution, to a complete renewal of consciousness. . . . The approach to the new Middle Age, like the approach to the old one, is marked by a visible rotting of old societies and an invisible formation of new ones. . . . Monarchies fall and democracies seem to be at the point of death, the old conceptions of the state and national economy break down; Europe begins to find herself in a condition very similar to that at the beginning of the Middle Ages.

Doctor Berdyaev is not the first, nor the only, nor, certainly, the last of the forerunners and prophets of a new dispensation that may prove to be a new mediaevalism. As he says, "there is a rhythm in history as there is in nature, a measured succession of ages and periods, alternation of diverse types of culture, ebb and flow, rise and fall", and as our own era of civilization, which came to birth about the year 1500, rose to its great height and is now declining to its fall, so the antecedent epoch of mediaevalism, ignored and forgotten for some four centuries, rises again to take its place and play its new part.

There is always a long period of gestation before delivery takes place. Modernism showed signs of its coming by the beginning of the fourteenth century. So the new mediaevalism began to stir and show signs of life about a century ago. It manifested itself in varied forms: Walter Scott and Romanticism, labor unions (in some sort resembling the old guilds), the Oxford Movement to restore to the English Church her Catholic heritage; William Cobbett, Robert Dale Owen, John Ruskin, and William Morris in their revolt against a fast-growing industrialism and money-capitalism; the Gothic Revival, the Pre-Raphaelite painters and poets, the rediscovery of Scholastic philosophy, and a score of other curious and interesting manifestations of the same spirit.

For a time the movement seemed to be going strong, but one of the laws of social rhythm seems to be that near the end of an era, and at the nodal point where the descending and ascending lines cross, there is a sudden reinforcement of the decadent vigor of the cause that already is lost, and for the moment the new and dynamic force is apparently blotted out. This happened in the first twenty years of the present century. During that most unwholesome and unhappy period, all that had held dominion for four centuries achieved a sort of hectic and pathological apotheosis, culminating in the Nemesis it had begotten: "The War to End All Wars".

The new mediaevalism was submerged by the new "enlightenment" and apparently obliterated by the new barbarism (the "Peace" as well as the War) but, to recover the words of his late Holiness Pio Nono at the "fall of Rome", "It was the work of the devil but God will turn it into a blessing" – which apparently is to come true now as it did then. Very quietly, and quite unconsciously, the decadent and discredited mediaevalism of the nineteenth century has acquired a new vitality and is manifesting itself with power. Between the two phases of the same thing there is, however, a wide and vital difference. Where then the impulse and the tendency were theoretical, romantic, sentimental if you like, now the impulse and the tendency are practical, realistic, and very closely related to life. The new mediaevalism seems to have become something that may almost be called the New Feudalism.

The old feudalism was marked by certain characteristics that set it apart from the other historic phases of society, particularly from its immediate successor, those modern times that are ours. Three qualities in particular stand out from the wide background of differentiation: the sense of personal relationship; the estimate of the nature of property; the acceptance of the reality of sanctions other than those devised and imposed by man himself. A fourth characteristic might be added, and that is the existence in all things, both physical and conceptual, of the human scale, but this was, so to speak, "a condition not a theory" and was one of the products of the sort of life that was then lived. Mediaeval man never thought much about it but accepted it as the natural condition of existence.

To quote R. W. and A. J. Carlyle:

> Feudalism is a system of personal relations, of land tenure, of military organization, of judicial order, and of political order. It affected the life of every class in the mediaeval community, from the villein to the king or emperor, and it even affected profoundly the position of at least the greater clergy, the bishops and abbots. There are, indeed, few aspects of mediaeval life which were not touched by it. . . . Feudalism represents two principles which in their ultimate development may seem contradictory, but which yet affected the minds of the men of the Middle Ages at the same time. The first principle is that of personal loyalty and devotion, the second is that of the contractual relation. . . . In the last resort feudal relations were contractual relations; that the vassal was bound indeed to discharge certain obligations, but only on the condition that the lord also discharged his obligations to the vassal.

It would be superfluous to insist on the diametric difference between this scheme of life and thought and that which has held in the West during the last few centuries, finding its climax at the time of the World War. "Measures not men"; the sacred and inalienable rights to, and the use of, private property; the sufficiency of the mental process to determine all social, ethical, and moral lines of conduct; the ultimate glory of the Brobdingnagian scale in all things – these have been as markedly characteristic of modernism as those others were of the Middle Ages and their feudal embodiment. No greater contrast could be conceived than that, let us say, between a walled town of the fifteenth century, and all that is implied socially, materially, and spiritually, and a modern megalapolis: Rothenburg and New York; Oxford and Birmingham; Perugia and Paris.

Is there any evidence, even though remote and indeterminate, that would indicate a tendency to return, not to the physical form and the explicit habits of life, but to the spirit and the basic principles of this elder time, now in these latter days of a great but very tired and not a little discouraged cycle of civilization? I think there is, and in the endeavor to substantiate this contention – and hope – I propose to consider the three marks of mediaeval feudalism, set down above, to see just what there is today that seems to indicate a possible return to them, at least in principle.

The general course of events ever since the end of the Middle Ages has worked steadily for the breaking down of the sense of human relationship and the substitution of a type of society where men become only impersonal items in a mechanical organism. During the Middle Ages society was hierarchical in form, with status taking the place of both caste and democracy. There was a system of corresponding duties and obligations; the peasant or villein was bound to his lord of the manor, owing him loyalty and service, on the land and in warfare, and to him he looked for protection, support in adversity, and defense against robbers and invading enemies. The lord also was the dispenser of justice through his manorial court. In his turn the lord owed similar service and allegiance to his overlord, count, baron, or other noble, and these again were personally subject to the King. In time the crafts, trades, and professions came together in guilds, or unions, where the tension of common interest and fellowship became strong and vital. The formal religious life brought tens of thousands of men and women into monasteries and convents, where the common life was the acme of human association. Over all was the Church, where, through its sacraments and services, its preaching, schools, hospitals, hospices, and works of mercy, men found a personal relationship that was intensified by the fact that there was not much else to enlist their interest and sympathy. Moreover, the Catholic religion itself (there was then no other) had been humanized and, so to speak, familiarized, to a degree quite unfamiliar to us today. Dogma, doctrine, and authority established certain sanctions that were supposed to control action, but beyond this the peoples' religion had become in a sense their own property and they made it very human indeed. The Virgin and the Saints, angels and devils, were their constant companions, either as all-powerful intercessors and friends, or as pestilent marplots and enemies, as the case might be.

The factory, the joint-stock, limited-liability company, the banking system and usury, money-capitalism, and technological mechanization soon did away with intimate personal relationship and the sense of duty, loyalty, and individual obligation. Centralization in government and administration, the breakup of the unit of human scale through the magnifying of great cities and the growth of monopoly, all worked in the same direction. Religious sanctions ceased to operate when rationalism, agnosticism, atheism, and separatism took the place of faith — or, if you like, credulity and superstition — and the sense of companionship with spiritual, but immanent, forces gave place to the somewhat less sociable sentiment of alliance in schism and rebellion.

The whole process was divisive and dehumanizing. Particularism, "rugged individualism", and spiritual isolation followed on. A mill hand or a pitman in the coal fields; a farm laborer on wage or a "share-cropper", a clerk in a vast industrial, commercial, or financial institution has rarely the smallest sentiment of personal relationship to the higher powers. His status is about that of a common soldier in a modern mechanized army. As for the political organism, he had, until lately, become not even a cog in the partisan wheel. In spite of plausible, but delusive, devices for bringing him back into personal operation — initiative and referendum, primaries and pre-primaries, and all that sort of thing — he still remained a lone and impotent voter, marking his cross as directed by the bosses and letting it go at that. What the party said to do the lonely citizen did.

The first signs of revolt — away from mechanism and back to feudalism — was the appearance in European Parliaments of personal "blocs"; small groups of legislators coagulating about some putative leader who could convince them of his power of leadership. Of course this meant the ultimate destruction of the parliamentary system (not a bad thing in itself) and the leadership was generally of a pretty low order. The virtue of the occurrence lay in the fact that the people wanted to be led, and could be, if they could follow something human and not a theoretical abstraction. In several cases they seem to have found this – in Soviet Russia, Italy, Germany, Turkey, and China, not to speak of minor and numerous examples. The secret of the success of the dictators is not the plausibility or popularity of their theories and projects but their human appeal to human beings who want to be directed and led by humans. It is the old feudal impulse stirring itself in a new guise.

Now it has come to America – and with a rush! It began to take shape a few years ago with the personal followings of strange leaders, from the ward boss (he already had thrived in power for half a century), the Ku Klux, Huey Long, and Father Divine to Dr. Townsend and Father Coughlin. This all seemed to be a blind feeling around for someone, *anyone*, to take the lead. Then recently, and cataclysmically, the searchers decided, and emphatically declared, that they had found their Leader. Whether they were right or not, whether or no the lead will be on to glory, is not the question; the important fact is that some millions of hitherto docile citizens threw parties, platforms, promises, and politicians into the discard, and voted for a Moses to lead them out of the mechanistic wilderness. In a word they voted to go back to feudalism – or rather to the feudal principle of personal association and human leadership.

Is there any visible sign of a return to the mediaeval idea of the nature of property, particularly as this showed itself under the feudal system? Again the answer would seem to be in the affirmative. From the time of the Stoics there has always been a division of opinion on this subject. Is property of the *jus naturale* or of the *jus gentium?* That is to say: is private property a part of the Natural Law or of Civil Law? The Stoics, the Fathers of the Church, the canonists, and the mediaeval philosophers were almost unanimous in holding that under the Natural Law private property could not exist and that all things should be common property. This however was only a metaphysical proposition, because, after the Fall, the State of Nature no longer existed. The Natural Law was indeed the moral principle of life, the true ideal, but with humanity what it unfortunately was, it was an ideal impossible of attainment. Civil Law, though imperfect, was justified when controlled by the principle of Justice and where it might tend to check or correct men's vices. In other words the right to private property was not a *natural* right but something determined by civil and man-made law.

This was the general principle underlying the mediaeval theory, and to a certain extent the practice, of the law of property. Here, as elsewhere, the controlling idea of Justice conditioned the operation of both principle and action. If a man, in the exercise of those rights over private property guaranteed him by the laws of the State, used this property with the ends of Justice in view, his title was clear, otherwise not. The same principle held in the case of power, authority, and force. The *use* made of any thing, attribute, or function established its validity. Without the operation of the quality of justice nothing was absolute, not even the authority of King, Pope, or People.

From the end of the Middle Ages onward the idea has become prevalent that private property is one of the *absolute* "rights of man", coming in the same category with "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness". In so far as each one of these desiderata is conditioned by the way in which it is used, this is true, but this controlling and limiting factor was not postulated to any pronounced degree during the time when property was coming to mean so much more than a household held in fee simple, the tools of a craft, art or trade, or an independently held and administered small business. The right to private property came to mean its exercise regardless of *how* this was exercised. "Shall I not do what I will with mine own?" was the conclusive question that was asked whenever any limit was suggested to the free exercise of power over property, particularly money and corporate power. In a word, then, private property was proclaimed as a part of the Natural Law.

There is a reaction against this assumption which for so long has been the backbone of money-capitalism. It is sporadic and rudimentary, but fairly definite, and its most obvious phase is the socialist and communist movements. No one could deny that both these phenomena have developed from the many abuses that have followed from the general acceptance of the theory that the right to private property is a part of the *jus naturale*, and the practice that has been a consequence. So much may be conceded, but there are certain factors that enter in to nullify the basic assumptions on which both movements are founded, and to render their remedial practices nugatory and, as a matter of fact, as bad as the disease. The first is that the common ownership of all the products of the earth was possible, even in the view of the Fathers and the canonists, only under the "State of Nature" which has not existed on this planet since the gates of Eden were closed; therefore, man being what he is, in his "fallen estate" common ownership of all property is no longer possible, would not relate itself to life, would be, in effect, and under the circumstances, an evil rather than a good, while in any case its restoration is no more than an academic proposition.

The second limiting factor is that property, whether private or communal, is validated only if the use to which it is put is towards the achievement of *Justice*. This cuts both ways, both in the case of the capitalist and the communist, but it is vital in both instances. The socialist is more or less conscious of its truth, though his panacea is just as impractical because it does not take into account, any more than does communism, the actual nature of man and his society. And there is another consideration that invalidates the whole socialist-communist theory and practice, and that is that the only guaranty and guardian of liberty is the possession of private property. The pauper or the proletarian may achieve *spiritual* liberty if he possesses some of the qualifications of the saint or the philosopher, but liberty within the social order or the civil polity is impossible without the possession of property – and liberty is worth more than either economic security or an abstract ideology. With all its mistaken theories and ineffective practices, the conscious tendency towards a revision of the idea of property, its restrictions, and obligations, is wholesome and promising, and it is very definitely a progress towards the recovery of the mediaeval and feudal principle.

In the matter of the third quality of this historic entity, and a possible return thereto – the recognition of sanctions other than those prompted by purely mental processes – the evidence is somewhat less direct, though it seems to be indicated. The most obvious is the new willingness on the part of men in general to seek and accept leadership. For a considerable time, three or four centuries in fact, and particularly of late, man, as Señor Ortega says, "accustoms himself not to appeal from his own to any authority outside him. He is satisfied with himself exactly as he is. Ingenuously, without any need of being vain, as the most natural thing in the world, he will tend to consider and affirm as good everything he finds within himself: opinions, appetites, preferences, tastes."

This was certainly so until very recently, and it was the direct result of the intellectual arrogance of the Renaissance, the principles of individualism, particularism, and the "right of private judgement" engendered by the Reformation, and the democratic theories and practices of the political revolution of the eighteenth century. The results of this process have not lived up to expectations, and the disappointment and disillusion of the post-War period have tended to disabuse men, to some degree, of the old idea of the sufficiency of their own mental processes; hence once more they look for direction. To quote Señor Ortega again, "Before long there will be heard throughout the planet a formidable cry, rising like the formidable howling of innumerable dogs to the stars, asking for someone or something to take command, to impose an occupation, a duty."

The prophecy of the great Spanish philosopher is now by way of being fulfilled. The quality of the personages now hailed by the masses as their leaders – Mussolini, Hitler, President Roosevelt, and all the rest – is not the point; that they are so accepted is the significant fact. The sanctions they offer and that are gratefully received are in social, economic, and political fields. So were those under feudalism that came down to the several ranks of society, each from its liege lord. There were, however, others of even greated authority emanating from higher levels of power and dominion: I mean the spiritual, and very particularly the religious sphere. There was then, as there had been for a thousand years, a definite and authoritative body of dogmatic, disciplinary, and directing sanctions that were universally recognized. True, they were often "more honored in the breach than the observance", but they were there and they formed a body of moral law that few denied though many disregarded.

I am disposed to think that there is a perceptible process of return towards something of the sort today. There seems to be much less assurance as to the infallibility of the purely intellectual process than there was, say, a generation ago. For one thing, the more eminent scientists are far more modest than then. They have come squarely up against the basic facts of the cosmos: time and space, mind and matter, force and energy in all their manifestations, and they are free to admit that they see before them the conspicuous sign: *Rue Barré*. They have rediscovered mystery and wonder, and a good many of them are glad of the fact. Again, the untethered mind has made quite a lot of mistakes, not only in philosophy, metaphysics, and theology, but in the exercise of its powers over social, economic, political, and moral problems, and these "errors of mortal mind" have given their proponents pause.

These very wholesome phenomena are perhaps negative in character, but there are a few positive evidences besides. At the very moment when the overt war on organized religion is reaching its height in Spain, Mexico, and the U.S.S.R., in many other countries historic religion seems to be gaining ground. Protestanism, which naïvely and unintentionally gave so much support to the "emancipation of the intellect", under the impression that it was freeing the soul of man from bondage, is losing something of its original force and authority. By its inherently divisive character it has lost coherency and has become centrifugal in its operation, while it has quite completely broken up the unity of an universally acknowledged spiritual and organic force. On the other hand, while there is certainly no mass movement "back to the Church" or even to formal religion itself, there is, apart from some of the more irreconcilable of the evangelical sects, such as the Baptists and Methodists, a growing recognition of the spiritual and social power of Catholicism and a measurable consciousness of the fact that something of the sort is indispensable in a well-ordered and sane society, and that very possibly the Catholic Church may possess and exercise the power to save us from our corporate as well as our spiritual sins. There is some significance in the fact that, of late those that have gone back to the old faith are very notably from the more highly educated and thoughtful ranks of society, particularly in England and the United States. Whether or no this is just a sporadic episode emergent from the dislocation and chaos of the time, it does seem rather clear that there is a current tendency towards the demand for, and the acceptance of, sanctions other than our individual "many inventions", and this is certainly in some sort a return to mediaeval ways and so, constructively, to a new sort of feudalism.

The fourth mark of that particular time and way of life, is the return to the human scale. This movement, which is now in its inception, is quite evident. During the Middle Ages the forms and modes of life were small and manageable. Great Rome had collapsed in ruin and man was back where he belonged, in a man's world. With the Renaissance *et cetera*, the process of magnification began all over again, and by the time of the World War megalopolis was firmly established, not only materially but mentally and psychologically as well. Now this begins to show very foolish and irrational, and we are coming to find it too huge and unwieldly for our handling. Big business, like the dinosaur, has become too big and will inevitably follow after its prehistoric model. International finance has become so international it is paralyzing the nations. Holding companies cannot hold their plunder. The great cities, no longer habitable by human beings, are already so congested that the time is not far off when they cannot be traversed by traffic and will therefore be useless for business. The skyscraper (a silly device at the best) is now becoming unprofitable, machinery has man under its thumb, both economically and spiritually, while scientific and mechanized warfare promises to be the nemesis of all.

Here also there are evidences of a return, sometime or other, to the human scale. The big manufacturing units, in self-defense, are being broken up and sent off into the country (which is good for them but hard on the country), while the workers are getting out into the suburbs, and even farther, as fast as Government or promoters will house them. The chain stores see, through the budding cooperatives, the writing on the wall. "Subsistence homesteads" are, in more senses than one, in the air, but they are sure to come down to earth, where they belong and where human beings can get from this same "good earth" their sufficient livelihood.

Is the evidence I have adduced enough to substantiate a belief that there is a certain tendency operative at present towards a return to some of the principles that held during the Middle Ages? Certainly not the forms or exactly to the ways of mediaevalism; still less to the peculiar and individual institutions of feudalism. Beneath the "form" lies the "substance";

behind phenomena the *noumenon*. One of the fallacies of the present day is confusion of the two and the mistaking of one for the other. If this mistake is made in estimating the character and content of the Middle Ages the essential value of the time is lost sight of.

Something of great importance is happening besides the breakup of a very notable period in the history of human culture and civilization. Creation is going on as well as destruction: recovery as well as declension. Personally I am convinced that it is a return to the realities of an old mediaevalism and the building-up of a new – and a better – feudalism.

Robert Bridges and Elizabeth Daryush

YVOR WINTERS

IT HAS long appeared to me that Bridges and Hardy must be regarded as the two most impressive writers of poetry in something like two centuries, perhaps since Milton; if Hardy is likely to appear the greater of the two on the first consideration, by virtue in part of the greater number of his highly successful lyrics, in part of the simpler and thus more directly accessible richness of his feeling, Bridges may gain on more mature consideration, as a result of greater intellectual scope and soundness and of a wider diversity of artistic mastery. Bridges is certainly the more mature, complex, and, morally speaking, the more rich of the two men. Hardy at his best offers a kind of summation of folk wisdom: it is his power and his limitation. Bridges, though he may not be invariably the most sound of thinkers or of critics, is the heir of the universities, the descendant of Arnold and of Landor, of Herbert and of Milton; his subject-matter is the full experience of the civilized man.

Similarly, it appears to me that the daughter of Robert Bridges, Mrs. Elizabeth Daryush, is one of the few first-rate poets to appear in the British Isles since the generation which produced her father and Thomas Hardy; aside from Yeats, T. Sturge Moore, and Viola Meynell, I can think of no poet now writing in England or in Ireland sufficiently interesting to bear comparison with her. She has been, as was her father for the greater part of his life, severely neglected and underestimated; and now that her father's reputation is beginning to increase, she runs the risk of being neglected, actually because of the purity and plainness of her best style, but on the explicit plea that she is a mere imitator of her father. She learned a great deal from her father: he was one of the greatest preceptors of the art, if one really understands, in some measure, his accomplishment, to be produced in England; she had the good fortune to grow up beneath his hand; and she appears to have profited intelligently by circumstances that can only be a source of envy to others. But she is not an imitator; and though a less great poet, she is an equally original poet, and frequently equally a master. It is interesting to consider them together in order to define the similarities and differences.*

Mrs. Daryush has disowned her first three books, published in 1911, 1916, and 1921, and wishes them destroyed. I have seen only the last of the three, and am willing to agree with her, though the book is deficient in virtue rather than positive in vice. Her mature career may be said to have begun with *Verses*, published in 1930, to have reached its most perfect achievement in *Verses, Third Book*, published in

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* POETICAL WORKS, EXCLUDING THE EIGHT DRAMAS *by Robert Bridges* (OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS. 576 pp. $1.50). This title is misleading, however, for *The Testament of Beauty* is likewise excluded. It is regrettable that there is not an inexpensive edition of the dramas, for four of them – the two on Nero, *Achilles in Scyros*, and *The Christian Captives* – are as great as anything Bridges ever wrote. The five volumes by Mrs. Daryush discussed in this essay are issued by the same publisher.

1933, to have reached a crisis and a collapse of form in *Verses, Fourth Book*, published in 1934, as a result, it would seem, of the discovery of new matter to which she found her style ill adapted, and to have begun the mastery of this matter, or of a few aspects of it, in *The Last Man and Other Poems*, published in 1936. Her talent, then, although it was obviously formed by her father's influence, appears to have borne fruit only after his death, and to have developed very rapidly within a very short period, after a long period of stagnation.

In the first three of the mature books, we have a poet much closer in spirit to Robert Bridges than in the last two, but still with important differences: the style of both poets, at their best, is pure and free of mannerism, whether of poet or of period; it represents the finest development of the intellectual, and anti-romantic, tendency of the nineteenth century, a tendency illustrated by the Wordsworth of the "Ode to Duty", by Bryant, by Landor, and by Arnold; but the greatest work of Bridges is relatively impersonal in theme as well, whereas most of his daughter's best work is in this respect intensely personal. The more personal lyrics of Bridges tend to become graceful and mild; the more impersonal lyrics of Mrs. Daryush tend toward vagueness in conception and in execution. The distinction is not absolute, but it is nevertheless obvious.

To illustrate the point I will quote four poems, two of the best poems by each, and two inferior specimens. The following poem, which is by Robert Bridges, is entitled "The Affliction of Richard":

Love not too much. But how,

When thou hast made me such,
And dost thy gifts bestow,
How can I love too much?
Though I must fear to lose,
And drown my joy in care,
With all its thorns I choose
The path of love and prayer.

Though thou, I know not why,
Didst kill my childish trust,
That breach with toil did I
Repair, because I must:
And spite of frighting schemes,
With which the fiends of Hell
Blaspheme thee in my dreams,
So far I have hoped well.

But what the heavenly key,
What marvel in me wrought
Shall quite exculpate thee,
I have no shadow of thought.
What am I that complain?
The love from which began
My question said and vain,
Justifies thee to man.

The next poem, which is by Mrs. Daryush, is number XXXV of *Verses, Third Book*, and appears without a title:

Fresh Spring, in whose deep woods I sought,
As in your cool abodes I played,
The phantoms of my childish thought,
The spirits of the faery shade;

Warm Summer, in whose fields I met
My fancy's every fond device,

Where small imagination set
The very scenes of Paradise;—

Now are your forests high the hall
Of shades more surely fugitive;
Now raptures lost beyond recall
In your unsunned recesses live;

Now to your cloudless meadows come
Forms lit with longing's fiercest flame;
Now truly are your haunts their home
Eternal, whom with tears I name.

These are, I believe, two of the most nearly perfect, and two of the greatest, short lyrics to be found in English. The poem by Bridges deals primarily with the apprehension of an experience more complex, and, if not more general, certainly more generalized; it is the experience of the intellectual who has progressed beyond the disillusionment of "Dover Beach", but who has not forgotten his scepticism or its bitterness. The poem by Mrs. Daryush deals with a simpler experience and in a sense a more personal one, an experience universal only in the sense that all of the basic experiences are universal; the theme is the intense realization of personal loss. It is characteristic of the more personal and emotional approach of Mrs. Daryush that, when she discovered the inadequacy of her earlier style to her later subject-matter, she should have turned on her earlier work in a manner little short of savage. There is a note appended to *The Last Man and Other Poems*, which offers numerous revisions, most of them excellent, of her earlier poems, and which requests the complete deletion of a great many other poems, most of which should certainly be retained; the poem which I have just quoted is one which she would like to destroy. It appears not to have occurred to her that her early convention was adequate to her early matter, and she appears to have small conviction of her mastery of that convention.

The disrupting influence in the last two books by Mrs. Daryush appears to be twofold. She appears to be moved, momentarily, at least, by a view of a kind of mechanistic destiny, without being able to surrender the inherited and traditional morality which has its origins in a very different view of destiny; and she appears to be increasingly conscious also of social injustice, of the mass of human suffering. The first difficulty, in so far as it enters her work, seems to the present writer to be a matter of confused thinking. The second difficulty is one of adjustment of style to matter, and, in some measure, at least, a difficulty of settling the emotions inspired by new matter to the point at which it may be scrutinized and comprehended. Her father might thus have made this transition more easily, for he was the more balanced and the more intellectual of the two temperaments; but the fact remains that he never attempted it. In any event, it is in connection with these subjects that one finds in Mrs. Daryush the extreme of the emotionalism which, when one compares her at least to her father, appears to be her differentiating quality. It is interesting at this point to compare two of the less successful poems by each poet, for at the lower levels of achievement the differences between the two are accentuated and the difficulties with which each is dealing become more clear.

The following sonnet is number thirty-five, of "The Growth of Love", by Robert Bridges:

All earthly beauty hath one cause and proof,
To lead the pilgrim soul to beauty above:
Yet lieth the greater bliss so far aloof,
That few there be are wean'd from earthly love.
Joy's ladder it is, reaching from home to home,
The best of all the work that all was good;
Whereof 'twas writ the angels aye upclomb,
Down sped, and at the top the Lord God stood.

But I my time abuse, my eyes by day
Center'd on thee, by night my heart on fire –
Letting my numbered moments run away –
Nor e'en 'twixt night and day to heaven aspire:
So true it is that what the eye seeth not
But slow is loved, and loved is soon forgot.

The poem is clear and sound in its conception; in its rhetorical execution it is not only faultless but brilliant; yet it moves almost with too great rapidity and ease; it does not display that struggle with, that concentration upon, its subject-matter, which results in deeply moving detail. In these respects it is typical of the lower levels of Bridges.

The following sonnet is from "The Last Man" by Mrs. Daryush. "The Last Man" consists of a blank-verse monologue, spoken by the last survivor of the human race after the final destruction brought on by the warring oligarchs, the monologue enclosing a sonnet sequence which might better stand alone, since it is primarily a personal meditation on various aspects of the ethical conflict which I have already noted in connection with the author's work.

There is no Eden now; the central tree
Is dead, and with it all that once was mine
Of shapely growth. . . . Gone is the clear design
Of gardens, vineyards, all my orderly
Inheritance, gone even the forest black
Beyond, from which I hewed my happiness,
And, in its place, only the featureless
Lush green, untended and without a track.
"Knowledge of good and evil." . . . Rather, this:
Sight *of some known, some living, weal or ill*
Worth even my very life to aid, to kill, —
That *was the precious guarded tree of bliss;*

Now it has vanished — there's nothing to say:
Go here, Go there . . . *not even* Go *or* Stay.

This poem is more interesting in some ways than the sonnet by her father; there is probably nothing, for example, in her father's sonnet as striking as the last line and a half of the octave of this. But the most obvious thing about this sonnet is the lax despair of the tone, a despair familiar enough to anyone who knows the twentieth-century Americans, with whom one suspects that Mrs. Daryush is very imperfectly acquainted, and, corresponding to this despair, the shockingly bad writing. Mrs. Daryush relies heavily upon italics for emphases, a plea, merely, to the elocutionist to do what the rhetorician has failed to do; instead of concentrating her matter, she diffuses it, especially in the octave, through a repetitious series of visual images, and these images, save possibly the last, are more or less stereotyped; she employs very weak stereotypes of phrasing, "the clear design", "my orderly inheritance", and of these two the second repeats and includes the first; she repeatedly employs weak run-over constructions, which leave the first line involved inconclusive as a perceptual unit, and which break the second line into two weak units, these occurring in lines four to five, five to six, and seven to eight, the last of these not being so bad that it might not stand if not preceded by the others; and in the next to the last line the accentuation is unpardonably faulty, this fault being common in her most recent work, and the result, apparently, of certain habits acquired in the practice of syllabic meter in some of her other poems. Mrs. Daryush, here as in many poems on social injustice, is overcome by her subject-matter and experiences a collapse into uncritical emotionalism, a collapse of a kind common indeed among the late romantics but surprising in the heiress of Robert Bridges. It is not that the orderly inheritance of Mrs. Daryush is inadequate, but, I believe, that she has not sufficiently understood it; she has acquired habits without justifying them, and in the face of a new orientation of experience, she has not at command the ideas which might reorient her habits and help her to maintain them. She may succeed in doing this; or it may prove that the habits are sufficiently strong to re-establish themselves, as, in fact, they appear to be doing, if one compares the improvement of the best poems in the most recent volume with the work in the volume preceding it.

In an age of much-publicized amateurs in metrical experiment, these two poets have rather unobtrusively accomplished some of the most brilliant metrical innovations in English poetry. Bridges wrote excellent poetry not only in traditional English meter, but also in classical meter, and in accentual, and in some of his later lyrics and in *The Testament of Beauty* he experimented — with no great success, in my own estimation — with syllabics. Mrs. Daryush has done nothing with accentual or classical meter, but she has perfected her father's experiments with syllabic meter, and has brought it to as high a degree of perfection, I imagine, as it can be brought. I cannot illustrate the extent of their experiments by quotation here, but I can at least illustrate the quality. The following lines are the opening stanza of Bridges' famous poem, "A Passerby":

Whither, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,
That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky clouding,
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?
Ah! soon, when Winter has all our vales opprest,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,
Wilt thóu glíde on the blue Pacific, or rest
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furling.

Now it frequently happens, especially in the work of a subtle and cautious experimenter, that a poem may be scanned more or less successfully by more than one system. Robert Bridges in his lifetime frequently expressed great scorn at the unsuccessful attempts of critics to describe his meters. I do not know how he personally scanned this poem, but it appears to me to scan perfectly if we regard it as a variation from an iambic norm: we thus get a preponderance of pentameter lines, with two hexameter, the second line being the sole hexameter in this stanza, and being so by virtue of a very light but nevertheless recognizably iambic foot, consisting of the last syllable of *bosom* and the subsequent preposition; we get a good deal of trisyllabic substitution, the examples in this stanza being the fourth foot of the fourth line, the third foot of the fifth line, the fourth foot of the sixth line (unless we elide the light syllables), the third and fifth feet of the seventh line (the second foot of this line being monosyllabic), the first and third feet of the last line – and if one chooses to read *bosom* in the second line as a monosyllable, thus reducing this line to pentameter, the fourth foot of this line becomes trisyllabic, unless indeed one reduces it by elision (the only other hexameter in the poem, the first line of the second stanza, can likewise be reduced by vigorous elision); and in the seventh line we get a specimen of accentual sprung rhythm, in the two syllables carrying accent marks.

Sprung meter, to which I have just referred, is of two sorts, accentual and syllabic. Accentual sprung rhythm occurs when a light syllable is dropped from a foot, so that the remaining and accented syllable at once carries the whole weight of the foot (as occurs frequently in accentual meter) and is brought into juxtaposition with another accented syllable, this juxtaposition of accents by other means than normal inversions being the characteristic of sprung meter. Syllabic sprung meter occurs when the unaccented syllable of a foot is heightened in accent till it equals its neighbors, so that we have two or three (or if more feet are sprung, more) accented syllables in sequence. In syllabic sprung meter, the accentual measure of the line is destroyed, and only the syllabic measure remains. Wyatt employed accentual sprung meter; Barnabe Googe employed syllabic sprung meter; Robert Greene employed both; Gerard Hopkins, who defines sprung meter carelessly, commonly employs the accentual variety, but his intention is frequently obscure. It is characteristic of Bridges that when he employs the accentual sprung meter in the second foot, he should follow with a trisyllabic foot, to render the effect a little smoother and more ambiguous, though there are one or two bolder specimens later in the poem. As my description of the other metrical effects in the poem indicated, nearly every experimental effect in the poem is compensated by a suggested alternative interpretation, the result being a meter at once unusual, learned, and very subtle.

The following poem, "Still-Life," by Elizabeth Daryush, is number XVIII from her most recent volume. It is one of her most brilliant successes in syllabic meter, and exemplifies syllabic sprung meter in a good many of the lines. There is, in my estimation, nothing approaching this or some half dozen other syllabic lyrics by Mrs. Daryush among the syllabic lyrics of her father, or in *The Testament of Beauty*. One reason is, perhaps, that Robert Bridges worked mainly with the twelve-syllable line, either whole or broken in two, which appears to be too long a unit for a meter unbound by accent; whereas, Mrs. Daryush, in working with the ten-syllable line, whole or broken, seems to have struck a natural rhythmic unit. Technically, there is probably only one truly accentual poem by Robert Bridges as good as this, the one beginning, "The hill pines were sighing". On the other hand, "A Passerby", at least by a narrow margin, is probably firmer in its rhythm, since the accentual-syllabic norm accounts not only for the number of syllables, but for the number and placement of accents, so that we have true variation in movement, and of the richest and most learned kind: in the syllabic poem we can have no variation from the syllabic norm, and within that norm we have only variety of rhythm, variety from which there can be no variation. Granting this difficulty, however, we can scarcely read the poem without being greatly impressed:

Through the open French window the warm sun
lights up the polished breakfast-table, laid
round a bowl of crimson roses, for one –
a service of Worcester porcelain, arrayed
near it a melon, peaches, figs, small hot
rolls in a napkin, fairy rack of toast,
butter in ice, high silver coffee-pot,
and, heaped on a salver, the morning's post.

She comes over the lawn, the young heiress,
from her early walk in her garden wood,
feeling that life's a table set to bless
her delicate desires with all that's good,

that even the unopened future lies
like a love-letter, full of sweet surprise.

If we regard the subject-matter of this poem, we find something rather curious: the matter explicitly described implies, largely through the ominous and melancholy tone, a social context which is nowhere mentioned, yet from which the poem draws its power, a power which is not only real but great. This implication probably reaches its most intense expression in the two lines, unforgettable in the melancholy of their cadence, which open the sestet; but it is never absent. The poem thus represents a successful handling of the social material with which the two last books have been obsessed, and an indication of continued development.

The greatest poems by Bridges are probably those beginning: "Joy, sweetest life-born joy", "Love not too much", "Sad sombre place", "The birds that sing on autumn eves", "The southwind strengthens to a gale", "Wherefore tonight so full of care", "Whither, O splendid ship", "Why hast thou nothing in thy face", "Beautiful must be the mountains", and "How well my eyes remember"; but there are other great poems and many others that are excellent. The greatest by Mrs. Daryush, I believe, are numbers XVIII, XX, and perhaps XXVIII of *Verses*, VIII of *Verses, Second Book*, V, IX (a highly "generalized" lyric, and hence a violation of my initial proposition), XXVI (an imperfect but powerful poem, stating explicitly the mechanistic preoccupation to which I have alluded), XXVIII, XXX, XXXIV, XXXV, and XXXVIII of *Verses, Third Book*, I of *Verses, Fourth Book*, and V and XVIII of *The Last Man and Other Poems*; though again there are other excellent poems, perhaps a fair number as good as the poems mentioned in *Verses*.

The quality which I personally admire most profoundly in both of them is the ability to imbue a simple expository statement of a complex theme with a rich association of feeling, yet with an utterly pure and unmannered style. Thus Bridges:

Unbodied presences, the pack'd
Pollution and remorse of Time,
Slipp'd from oblivion re-enact
The horrors of unhouseled crime. . . .

And Mrs. Daryush:

Anger lay by me all night long,
  His breath was hot upon my brow,
He told me of my burning wrong,
  All night he talked and would not go.

He stood by me all through the day,
  Struck from my hand the book, the pen;
He said: "Hear first what I've *to say,*
  And sing, if you've the heart to, then."

And can I cast him from my couch?
  And can I lock him from my room?
Ah no, his honest words are such
  That he's my true-lord, and my doom.

Such work represents, I believe, and in spite of the italics, which could easily in this case be dispensed with, the perfection of English poetic style; something of the same quality is reached here and there by Shakespeare, Jonson, and Donne at the end of the sixteenth century, and earlier, in a few passages, by Gascoigne, and by a few poets on a few occasions – notably Herbert in "Church Monuments" – in the seventeenth century. A few poets, such as those whom I have alerady mentioned, achieve something comparable in the nineteenth century. There is much other great poetry in English, but poetry of this type, at its best, is probably the greatest, and in its purity of style and richness of meaning it defines the norm, the more or less clear consciousness of which probably gives much of their identity to the variant types. The virtues of such poetry are nearly forgotten in the twentieth century.

REVIEWS

The Cooperative Illusion*

EVER since Marquis Childs brought out his surprisingly popular *Sweden: The Middle Way*, which has sold over 20,000 copies, the whole subject of cooperatives has been in the forefront of the discussions of American intellectuals; and no small contribution to the general flow of interest in the cooperative movement has been made by a man from the opposite side of the world – Toyohiko Kagawa, the Japanese evangelical Christian who has worked valiantly for cooperatives in his own country, and in the course of a visit to America has fluttered the dovecotes of many a local Y.M.C.A. Kagawa is himself an obviously earnest person, born of distinguished family, whose humanitarian sympathy for the poor led him to abandon the background into which he was born and go to work in the Japanese slums. His *A Grain of Wheat*, according to his publishers, has gone through two hundred editions in Japan; of all his books, in original and translation, some 1,250,000 have been sold. This brief consideration of his latest work to be translated into English – *Brotherhood Economics*, based upon a series of lectures given at the Colgate-Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, New York – can only hope to give a general notion of his views, and to attempt to point out the illusion that seems to the reviewer to be implicit in the whole cooperative scheme.

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* BROTHERHOOD ECONOMICS *by Toyohiko Kagawa* (HARPERS. 208 pp. $1.50).

Kagawa begins by disassociating himself from both capitalism and communism. "In the twentieth century," he writes, "materialistic capitalism and materialistic communism must be abandoned. . . ." For them he substitutes cooperative economics – an organization of production, consumption, and life in general in which the cooperative principle, infused with Christian love, is to be the rule of life.

Some of his figures and examples are striking, to say the least. One is presented with statements like the following:

> It is estimated [in connection with sexual satisfaction as an economic value to be taken into consideration] that the money spent on licensed and private prostitution in Japan amounts to 1,000,000,000 yen ($300,000,000) annually. Significantly, the annual consumption of rice amounts to 1,500,000,000 yen ($450,000,000), or only one half as much more. . . .
>
> There are 5,200,000 families in the Cooperative Federation of Japan. . . . Eighty per cent of the farmers are organized into cooperatives. . . .
>
> In Japan, since we have had farmers' associations, and have started the cooperative movement, thieves have almost disappeared. . . .

It is somewhat difficult, short of having the actual figures at hand, to believe his statement that "now [in

England] the conservative estimate of membership [in the cooperatives] is 28,000,000 individuals. . . . The British Consumers' Cooperatives distribute fifty per cent of British daily necessities and commodities. . . ."

Of a character with such a statement is his remark that "through the failure of the NRA, it is being written large in history that capitalism, even in improved form, has no place in a permanent social order" — when it is perfectly obvious that it was old-line capitalism that defeated the NRA, to capitalism's own possible disadvantage. And surely Kagawa's explanation of the history of the Paris Commune of 1871 is the neatest and most misleading yet to appear in print:

> In the year 1871 Paris was taken over by the Labor Party. One hundred and fifty thousand laborers became the government. They controlled the factories and production for about six months. The government put more money into machinery and workshops. The laborers produced and produced and produced. The bourgeois boycotted them, however, so that they had no market for their products. Thus they met failure at the end of six months.

However all this may be, the fact remains that Mr. Kagawa has in essence added nothing new to the cooperative idea, and that that idea remains as much of an illusian as ever. Starting from his evangelical Christian viewpoint, he rejects that conception of Christianity in which the working of the individual upon himself, with the help of Grace, results in an individual approach to the godlike, and argues for a conception in which all the emphasis is upon a sort of communal salvation achieved through brotherly love and a communal approach to the Imitation of Christ.

The cooperative movement remains, as it will always remain, a mere means of distributing goods. As has been pointed out before in this magazine, there is no moral distinction between the cooperative consumer who wishes to get his goods cheaper, in order that he can enjoy more goods, and the capitalistic producer who wishes to sell his goods at a profit, in order that he in turn may get more goods. Both are thinking in purely material terms. And by the same token that the proletarian who works for the State is no better off, so far as moral relations of man to man are concerned, than the proletarian who works for the most exploitative of capitalists, so the man who works for a "cooperative" is a proletarian still, and Mr. Kagawa's effort to inject into this relationship a spirit of Christian brotherhood remains really no more than a pious wish. The unit of society is still the individual, and the tone of society is still set by the moral character of the individuals who compose it. If that individual is allowed individual control of the means of production, he will be a free man in a society of freemen; and only thus can a free society exist. When Mr. Kagawa says "I do not recognize the right of private ownership in the fields of production, marketing, transportation, monetary circulation, mutual aid, and utility cooperatives", he is arguing in direct contradiction of the ancient conception of private property which he himself takes the trouble to define: "In the light of this Cross-bearing love, property rights of individuals and inheritance rights would all be dedicated to God and society, profit and gain would all be recognized as belonging to God and, therefore, rightfully to be returned to Him. . . ."

This is no more than the traditional Christian idea of private property, held in stewardship under God. It has all the actuality that comes from thinking in terms of the individual, who is real, instead of in terms of the mass, which is a delusive fiction. Mr. Kagawa seems to recognize the distinction when he says: "Greed is the great threat. . . ." Indeed it is, but greed is a thing that attacks the individual, and must be combated by a spirit or a system for which the individual, not the illusory mass, is the unit of consideration.

MARVIN MCCORD LOWES

The Liberty of Liberalism *

IN HIS latest book, *The Future of Liberty*, George Soule is concerned with finding a way through which a happy future may be insured for liberty. He begins by calling for a redefinition of liberty, since the old concepts are no longer entirely workable. He rejects the classic definition of John Stuart Mill, along with Mill's proposed means of establishing liberty; Mill, in Mr. Soule's estimation, held to a definition that was negative and mechanical, and in so far as his *laissez-faire* policy has been used it has not worked out at all well. "Negative liberty," he says, "liberty as absence of restraint, is meaningless and self-contradictory, whether for the individual or for society." Liberty must have "a concrete and embracing social purpose"; it must be used for specific social ends: liberty, at least under our present economic arrangement, is not

* THE FUTURE OF LIBERTY *by George Soule* (MACMILLAN. 187 pp. $2.00).

a sufficient end in itself. The immediate end which liberty must be made to serve, declares Mr. Soule, looing at the omnipresence of social injustice, is to alleviate the distress of the economically downtrodden. This can be effected by increasing the average man's political liberty, by giving him a more powerful voice in governmental affairs. Such a move, says Mr. Soule, would fit in with the popular idea of the American tradition; and he claims that the type of liberty he envisages is indeed compatible with the American ideal. Practical politics make the recognition of this compatibility – or reconciliation – highly desirable, because "for better or for worse, the symbols that are most potent in this country are those that are found in our tradition. Whatever is done about them, they cannot be ignored by anyone who is long going to influence us as a people." Here Mr. Soule, who is an editor of *The New Republic*, seems to be warning his fellow socialists that, at least outside of New York, the stars and stripes will always gain a larger following than the arm and hammer.

Liberty with a "concrete and embracing social purpose" requires that "somebody's liberty to do something must be denied if any action is to be taken", Mr. Soule declares, affirming in his own right a tenet common to theorists of liberty from Diderot to Gottfried Feder. But before coming to the persons to be restricted, Mr. Soule reviews the history of liberty in America. His analysis of its course has a decidedly Marxian trend. His bias, he allows, is "democratic and liberal", and since *The New Republic* has so earnestly striven to show that democracy and liberalism have nothing to fear from Marxism, indeed all but find their apotheosis in it, he may be left the terms without dispute. Liberty, he says, is not of a peculiarly American origin; it "was not invented by Edison or manufactured by Ford", but "arose in a European setting". "The doctrines of freedom were used as an expression of rebellion against the old order." "The doctrines on which the old order was built supported the authority of the Church, the nobles, the king, and the guild craftsmen, while they left little place for the peasant or freehold proprietor of land, the employer of labor, the accumulator of capital, the banker, or the merchant capitalist." Mr. Soule makes clear how closely allied was the idea of liberty in its modern form to the rise of capitalism, but he obscures the historical truth by making it appear that the first telling attacks on the security of the peasant and the small freeholder did not come from the banker and the merchant capitalist in implying that this security did not exist before the latter's advent. The rise of the capitalist in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was coincident with, and was the chief cause of, the decline in the equitable distribution of land. The researches of R. H. Twaney, Max Weber, and Funck-Brentano certainly indicate this.

The American Revolution Mr. Soule takes as a revolt of growing capitalism against feudalism. "The equality and democracy that they [the American Revolutionists] believed in was self-government by the propertied classes, not by the artisans, indentured servants, or slaves, and the reason to which they appealed was their reason, using as its major premisses the assumptions that would lead to the conclusions that served them." The implication is that this sad state of affairs was relatively better than feudalism; it was as much as could be expected at the time, when, as Mr. Soule indicates, men's thoughts were so conditioned by certain inevitable determinants in the great upward march of history. The American Revolution looked on as a revolt against feudalism accords with a neat "dialectic" of history, but it is contrary to the historical fact that the last few remnants of mediaeval organization fell with the head of Charles I and that the Colonials revolted against a nation ruled by a capitalist oligarchy.

The next meeting of thesis and antithesis to produce a new synthesis in American history Mr. Soule finds in the Civil War. The forces of reaction were in the South, a sort of anachronistic 1776 capitalism; enlightenment (such as the current means of production allowed then) came out of the Northern factories and won the day at Appomattox. It was far from the final step toward true liberty, but it was a step forward, for it meant the nation-wide expansion of industrialism, and so the growth of a society in which socialism would be feasible. But Mr. Soule's words almost lead one to believe that he holds slavery to have been the main issue of the great conflict, though this may be part of his adherence to the American "tradition".

The Third crucial moment is upon us. The captains of industry are now the oppressors – such are the reversals of dialectical history – and the forces of light are the New Deal. Mr. Soule then goes on at some length to explain why no one should be taken in by the propaganda of the Liberty League. The need for this grows out of an unpleasant situation:

Mr. Soule is attempting to show that his liberalism (or socialism) accords with American traditions, and at the same time the oligarchs of the Liberty League call on American tradition to defend *their* side of the argument. That the gentlemen of the Liberty League, and the large capitalists in general, are interested less in preserving human rights than in preserving their profits, not many will dispute; but Mr. Soule's "democratic and liberal" bias obscures the issue. For instance, that employers resort to violence to break strikes not only points to the fact that they are intent on "oppressing" their workers; it also points to the fact that employers recognize in strikes dress rehearsals for revolution. And what must be grasped by those who would understand the political currents of the times is that these dress rehearsals are agitated for and engineered by persons who, though they may call it "liberty", are aiming at an end which no one, whether oppressed or not, can reconcile with any verifiable standard of Americanism. The political and economic situation is not a simple opposition of exploiting capital and exploited labor, and by presenting it as such Mr. Soule offers a prescription that will tend to aggravate rather than to cure our ills.

Having come to the conclusion that any talk of states' rights and preserving the Constitution is merely a smoke-screen behind which the industrial robber barons seek to hold and increase their ill-gotten gains, Mr. Soule rests all his hopes of liberty on the New Deal. He views the New Deal, naturally, as but a temporary thing and would agree with the Mr. Hearst of a few months ago that the Roosevelt administration is at best but a stepping-stone to socialism. He looks toward a "planned" and collective society as a happy necessity.

As a liberal and believer in the benefits of industrialism, Mr. Soule is indissolubly wedded to the idea of progress (which is also evident from his interpretation of our history), to the notion that human nature will flower in its true goodness once the restraints of an unjust society have been removed, and to the common error that the state which provides its citizens with material abundance is necessarily a healthy one. With Mill, and with his eccentric teacher Bentham, Mr. Soule appears to believe that a state is founded on a desire after economic advantage, and that the hierarchical ordering of a state (since even socialism must suppose such an ordering) will fall into its proper line once the opportunity of acquiring goods is equitable. But his idea of the equitable is initially suspect for all those who do not share his enthusiasm for the sort of state Soviet Russia would be if the claims of its advocates were true. Untouched and seemingly unrecognized by Mr. Soule, there lies below the questions he discusses the profounder question of man's nature and what conduces to its happiness, and any system which endeavors to provide man with a way of life before recognizing what he is will establish its society only at the cost of extinguishing man. To answer that we cannot turn to the philosopher's study and to the altar while the hideous structure of industrial capitalism crumbles about us is no answer; for unless we recapture the vision of man that once came from these places, we shall be buried too deep for any reply.

GEOFFREY STONE

The Jew and the Intellect *

READERS of the works of Aquinas may recall the name of a certain Rabbi Moyses who not infrequently appears in the pages of the *Summa*, the *Contra Gentiles*, and especially in the tractate *De Potentia Divina*. The reference is to Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, commonly called Maimonides. He was a Spanish Jew, born at Cordova in 1135. When the Alhomades, a sect of Moslem puritans, captured Cordova in 1148, all Jews and Christians were foced to embrace Islam or to take the road of exile. Seventeen years later, in 1165, the feet of this wandering Jew came to rest in Cairo. There he wrote that profound *Guide for the Perplexed* which, with his other works, earned for him his place in the history of mediaeval thought. The book was hailed as an effort to reconcile the Jewish faith with the main ideas of the Aristotelian philosophy.

Rabbi Goldman's book challenges that traditional evaluation. It expressly refuses to accept Maimonides as a mere Aristotelian. "They who think that the man's mission was to teach metaphysics, or even to harmonize Judaism with Aristotelianism, miss the very motive of his being." His chief purpose was religious, to comfort the suffering, to salvage Jewry, and to expound Judaism. He was concerned, it seems, primarily with conduct, with the patterns of associative living. His system of thought should be examined, we are told, not as an appendage to Aristotle,

* THE JEW AND THE UNIVERSE *by Solomon Goldman* (HARPERS. 257 pp. $2.50).

as the child of Reason, but as a continuation of Judaism, as the offspring of intuition. "His philosophizing made neither Greek nor Aristotelian of him. Logic and Reason prevailed up to a certain point; deeply rooted in his being was the faith of intuition."

So we are presented with a portrait of Rabbi Moyses as a religious apologist who set himself the task of proving to his fellow Jews that the popular phraseology of the Bible only veiled the profoundest metaphysical truths. In eighteen chapters, wherein the reader is introduced to much rabbinical lore, this portrait is vigorously drawn. Maimonides, we are told, "is persistently expressing the Jewish view of the universe", in which view the intuitive approach prevails. Among Jewish thinkers, "reason invariably yields the palm to intuition, speculation to meditation, formulation to awareness". We can best understand Maimonides "as the traditional Jew with a passion for logic; he was a rationalist, he had mastered the Aristotelian technique to perfection, but he loved deeply every item in the lore of his people". So much was he a Jew that "those who maintain that Maimonides was the pure metaphysician, completely dominated by Reason, Aristotelian to the finish, have much to explain".

This being so, it is not surprising that the author deals less than gently with Aristotle. For example, we are told that "Aristotle's metaphysics was so deftly manipulated that for centuries it passed for Pure Reason". On the same page we learn that Plato's idealism was never really rejected by Aristotle; "the distinguished disciple was simply twisting the master's theories out of their beautiful settings". Again, we are informed that "Aristotle predominated through the Middle Ages, only because it was comparatively easy to abstract from him a method and to discard his philosophy". Indeed, our author's loyalty to his concept of Jewish intuition makes him peculiarly contemptuous of all the philosophy of the West. "The general impression that European philosophy reposes solidly on reason is a deception. With hardly a thread of truth in the fabric, it is puzzling how the fiction found such ready acceptance."

Loose statements of this kind disturb the balance of the book. A far more serious defect, however, is the author's failure to indicate the place of Maimonides in the history of the philosophy of the West. Yet it was as a philosopher, and not as a rabbi, that the great Jewish thinker of the twelfth century was welcomed by the Scholastics.

The *Guide*, written in Arabic, was first published in 1190 and was translated into Hebrew ten years later. Within a few years of its author's death (1204) it was rendered into Latin. It first appears in the Scholastic world in the writings of Alexander of Hales, to be used subsequently by William of Auvergne, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and John Duns Scotus. The thirteenth century, in which those men lived and wrought, saw many of the fundamental views of Maimonides find a lasting home within the various systems of the Scholastic philosophy.

Now, the philosophical climate in which Maimonides lived was predominantly Aristotelian. Aristotle's philosophy, which had been given prominence in Arabic thought by Avicenna and Averroës, attained a dominating place in Jewish thought also, mainly through the work of Abraham ibn Daud (1110-1180). The immediate result of its introduction among the Jews was the emergence of a number of fundamental contradictions between a philosophy founded on pure reason and a faith based upon a traditional scripture. Maimonides, as a Jewish thinker, found himself confronted with three chief contradictions: first, that between the divine substance of the Aristotelian universe and the God who possesses such attributes as are implied in the Bible; second, that between Aristotle's prime mover, bound in chains of necessity, and the Creator described in the first chapters of Genesis; and third, that between Aristotle's metaphysical Deity and the living God of Biblical and Talmudic Judaism, applying His providence to the individual acts of men and things. The technique of Maimonides in his effort to resolve those three contradictions furnishes much of the subject-matter of this book.

Dr. Goldman, in his evaluation of that technique, throws the emphasis on the rabbi rather than on the philosopher, and insists that Maimonides saw no distinction between religion and philosophy. He recognized no such dichotomy, our author says; by making philosophy and religion synonymous he went beyond any Jewish thinker who preceded him. Whether that assertion is justified or not is beside the point. The main fact, for students of the history of philosophy, is that Maimonides came into Western thought as an Aristotelian. Fifty years after the publication of the *Guide*, when Christian thinkers were facing the very same problems that he had faced – problems concerned with the nature of the Deity, with the creation of matter, with the providence of God — they found the weapons of defense already forged for the by Rabbi Moyses the Egyptian. In constructing their theistic philosophy they not only adopted the trend of his powerful arguments but sometimes even used his very words. In this connection it is to be noted that the pith of the third of the five Thomist proofs for God's existence, the *argumentum ex possibili et necessario*, is to be found in the work of Maimonides.

Dr. Goldman's main scope is to prove that Maimonides was a rabbi *tout court* and that philosophy, as such, held no interest for him. Yet he pays tribute to the man's gift for synthesis and tells us that, for him, "Jewish tradition and Aristotle cannot differ, since both of them have been confirmed by the same Active Intelligence". But he seems to fail to understand that Maimonides's great philosophical triumph, in resolving the famous contradictions, was precisely an achievement in synthesis, however he may have employed his rabbinical intuition in the selection of his standpoint.

For example, Maimonides found, in his day and age, that there were two conceptions of the nature and attributes of God. First, there was the Aristotelian conception, namely that God is the Thought of the Thought, the prime mover, pure actuality, absolute spirit within itself; this is an affirmative conception. Then there was the theory of the Neo-Platonists, holding that God can never be considered as the Self-Thinking Reason, because he can never be defined by any positive term and is exalted above all possible human knowledge. The Maimonides synthesis guaranteed this Neo-Platonist absoluteness of God, His oneness and transcendence, by removing from Him every positive affirmation; at the same time it saved the reasonable, thinking quality of God and the universe by taking refuge in the Aristotelian theory of a Deity who is the Thought of the Thought. Similarly, in his discussion of the problem of creation *ex nihilo*, to salvage the divine omnipotence he made God the Beginner of the world, a free agent in the work of creation; but to stabilize Nature's lawfulness he appealed to Aristotle's prime mover and made God the guarantor of the eternal laws of the universe.

This is far from being Rabbi Goldman's evaluation of Maimonides. His depreciation of the intellect and his insistence on the intuitive approach proclaim him a child of this impatient generation of ours, which summarily rejects that laborious, mediate form of epistemological attack first formulated by Aristotle and passed on by Maimonides, among many other torch-bearers in the long line of thinkers who are responsible for the fundamentals of Western thought.

CHAS. F. RONAYNE

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